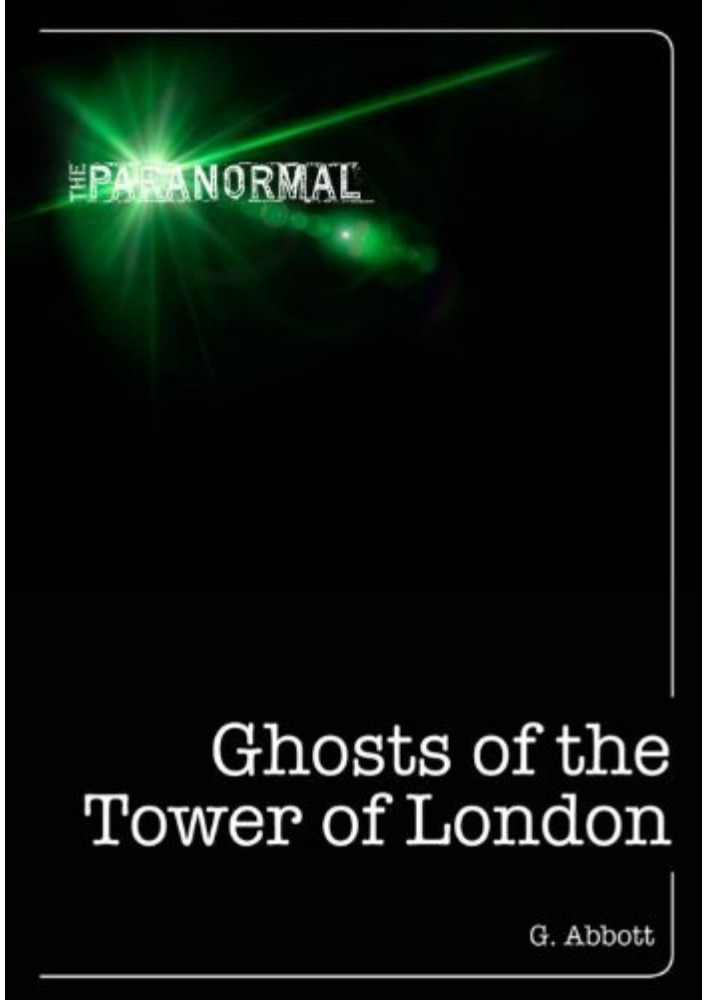
THE PARANORMAL
Ghosts of the Tower of London
G. Abbott

VISIT...

THE PARANORMAL

Ghosts of the Tower of London

G. Abbott

By the same author:

Great Escapes from the Tower of London
Tortures of the Tower of London
Beefeaters of the Tower of London
The Tower of London As It Was

Ghosts of the Tower of London

G. ABBOTT

Yeoman Warder (retd)
HM Tower of London
Member of Her Majesty's Bodyguard of the
Yeomen of the Guard Extraordinary

Verses by Shelagh Abbott

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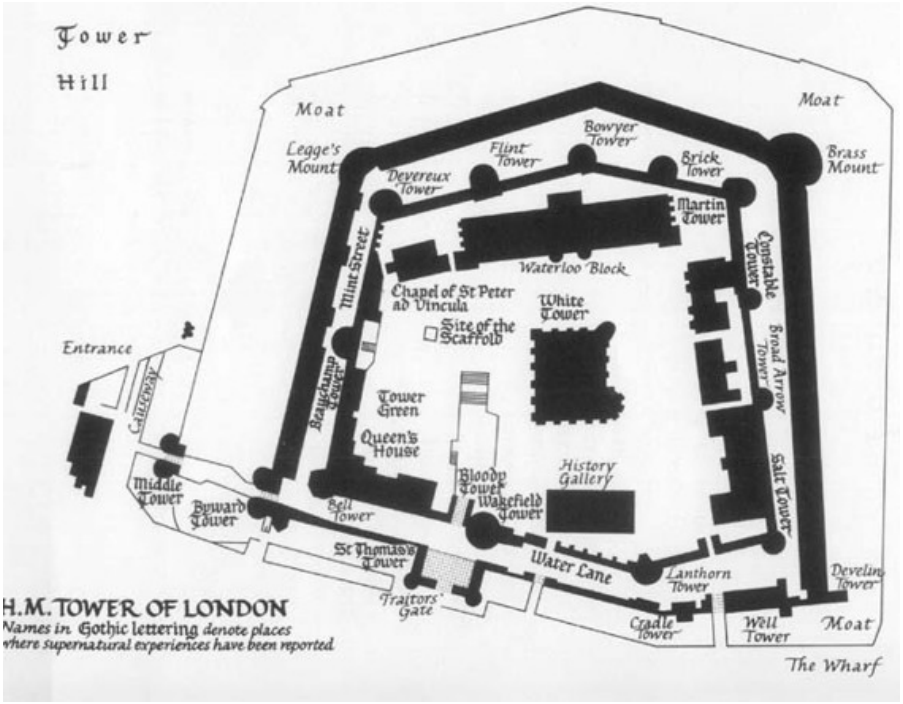
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Names in Gothic lettering denote places where supernatural experiences have been reported

Foreword

Ghost stories have a certain fascination for most people, whether or not they believe in them, and it is difficult to imagine a more appropriate habitation for ghosts (if they exist) than Her Majesty's Tower of London, with its nine hundred years of eventful and, at times, grim and violent history.

Over the centuries, and indeed in recent times, people have reported inexplicable sights and sounds in the Tower. Yeoman Warder Abbott is to be congratulated on his carefully researched collection of these experiences, made additionally interesting by the inclusion of historic details of the Tower and of the victims whose ghosts are said to haunt their erstwhile prison.

I am confident that the reader will find this little book both interesting and instructive.

Field Marshal Sir Geoffrey Baker
GCB CMG CBE MC
Constable of Her Majesty's
Tower of London

October 1979

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgements to the Constable of Her Majesty's Tower of London, Field Marshal Sir Geoffrey Baker, GCB, CMG, CBE, MC, the Resident Governor 1971–79, Major General Sir W. D. M. Raeburn, KCVO, CB, DSO, MBE, MA, and to his successor, Major General Giles Mills, CB, OBE. Also those of my colleagues, past and present, without whose experiences this book would have been a spiritless effort indeed!

The verses at the beginning of each section were written especially for this little book by my wife Shelagh, to whom I am deeply grateful both for them and for so much besides.

DEDICATED
TO MY COLLEAGUES
THE YEOMAN WARDERS
OF
HER MAJESTY'S TOWER OF
LONDON

When the merry wag doth hush his voice
And cower … then shall ye know
That ghosts do walk within this ancient Tower.
Fact or fantasy, truth or tale,
As shadows shorten and the skies grow pale,
Can ye with certainty stand and claim
That voices called – but no man came?

Shelagh Abbott

GHOSTS OF THE TOWER OF LONDON

by Geoffrey Abbott, Yeoman Warder (retd.)

(Note; this article was based on the author's researches while living in the Tower during the 1970s and 80s, a period when the threat of possible terrorist attack within the castle was ever-present; lest it be thought that some of these ghostly visitations could have been carried out by practical jokers, it should be remembered that at that time, all night patrols of the grounds were carried out by armed sentries).

The Tower of London, that stone time-machine whose walls have witnessed so many horrific scenes of torture and execution, must surely lay claim to be the most haunted group of buildings anywhere. This royal palace, the oldest Norman castle in the country, has not only been a royal residence and court, a place of extravagant splendour in which Tudor kings and queens regaled themselves, and from where the coronation processions set out for Westminster Abbey, but also a State prison in which were incarcerated those accused of treason and conspiracy.

Behind its embattled walls, violent death in all its many forms snuffed out the lives of the famous and the infamous. The sword ended the life of Queen Annne Boleyn, the axe slew Queen Katherine Howard, Lady Jane Grey, Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, and Lord Hastings. Griffin, Prince of Wales, fell to his death from the high windows of the White Tower, and the Duke of Clarence was drowned, plunged into a butt of malmsy wine. A fatal disease struck down Judge Jeffries, the 'Hanging Judge', in the Bloody Tower, and Lady Arabella Stuart died insane in the Queen's House. Headless corpses of those decapitated in public on Tower Hill were buried in the Royal Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula within the castle, and enemy spies of both World Wars faced military firing squads in the Tower, thereby paying the price for their crimes.

But even violent death came as a merciful release to the many who were tortured within these grim walls; men like the Jesuit priest John Gerard, the Gunpowder Plotter Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators, and Protestant Cuthbert Sympson, were but a few of the many, women too, who suffered on the dreaded rack and by other instruments of inhumane persuasion in the vaults beneath the White Tower.

Is it any wonder then that the intensity of their agonies should imprint itself so strongly on the aura of the ancient castle as to echo down the centuries, the restless spirits seeking to remind us of what they endured in the Tower? And who should be more aware or such eerie visitations than the yeoman warders and their familes who live in the Tower, and the sentries on their nightly patrols? And it was just such one of those soldiers who, on duty at the Main Gate during

World War I, saw a small procession approaching him from Tower Hill, the ancient site of the public executions. Two men carrying a hurdle were escorted by others dressed in long black gowns and, heedless of the sentry's instinctive command that they halt, the macabre group noiselessly proceeded into the Tower, passing so close to the soldier that he could see the corpse which lay prone on the hurdle, the head lying by the side of the body. The guard was turned out, the whole area searched, but nothing untoward found. On subsequent nights the same sentry again witnessed the grim cavalcade, the man eventually having to be rostered to a different shift of duty. Coincidentally, similar sightings were experienced during World War II, the dress of the funereal escorts then being reported as identical to that worn by the Sheriff of London's men during the Middle Ages.

Betwixt Tower and Thames, the Wharf provides a cobbled roadway lined with ancient cannon and green lawns. Deep beneath the Wharf are other, more modern installations such as drains to carry rainwater into the river. And in 1973 a workman, having descended into the shaft to inspect the area, suddenly heard a deep voice eching along one of the tunnels, Distinct yet distant, the words "Oh dear!" came to his ears and, even as he peered apprehensively into the gloom, a deep and prolonged sigh came from the tunnel which stretched behind him. Frantically he scrambled out, and nothing would induce him to enter that particular shaft again!

Inexplicable voices also alarmed the residents of the Devereux Tower in the 1920s. This tower is situated on the inner ballium wall, a bulwark honeycombed with passages leading to other towers once used for more sinister purposes. It was while the family of an Army NCO was having a late meal when they suddenly heard loud knocking and moaning noises coming from the thickness of the wall beneath their apartment. They checked the cellars, but to no avail, and the matter was reported to the colonel of the regiment. Similar sounds were frequently heard on later occasions but, as so often happens in the Tower of London, such occurrences become part of the way of life there and, unless particularly alarming or distressing, are actually missed when they cease.

This attitude of mind was very much in evidence in the family of a yeoman warder living in the Casemates, the apartments situated within the thickness of the outer walls of the castle. In the early 1980s he and his wife became aware of a figure which came out of a room, passed across a corridor and disappeared into one of the arrow-slits which pierces the opposite wall. It moved quickly, never visible for more than a couple of seconds, and appeared quite frequently to the residents, who familiarly referred to it as the 'Flitter.' Guests staying in

other of their rooms complained of a feeling that they were not alone, and of hearing the sound of deep, measured breathing, and this sensation had been experienced in other apartments in the Casemates, sometimes accompanied by other, more unpleasant emanations. In one, the occupants became aware of a strong dank smell which occurred about ten o'clock each night for over a fortnight, a smell reminiscent of mouldering clothes. There was also a feeling of intense evil where the smell was strongest. In that particular apartment the three-year-old son of the family was found sitting at the end of the bed, whimpering and tense and, as described to me by his mother, as 'looking at something through his closed eyelids.'

Children seem to be very susceptible to supernatural visitations. In the terrace of houses once the Tower's hospital, the family in one of the flats reported that although their small son frequently played in a comer of the lounge, once or twice a month he would run out of it and stay a few feet away, staring into the corner and crying. No amount of cajoling would persuade him to return to his usual spot, even when his father went there and tried to coax him.

And it was related to me by a 1920s resident of the Tower that Eileen, the teen-aged daughter of a yeoman warder then living in the Broad Arrow Tower, felt far from alone when going up the spiral stairs to her bedroom. On this occasion, the 'presence' walked around the spiral ahead of her, abruptly stopping when she stopped, and her bedroom felt suddenly cold and damp. Again a search revealed nothing but empty rooms and locked doors.

The Bloody Tower, of course, cannot be left out, so grim is its history, and it was during World War I that its then occupants, a yeoman warder and his family, almost had a glimpse of the unbelievable. Their daughter Nellie went up to bed as usual, her bedroom being the one in which the two little Princes were believed to have been murdered, only to scream as she saw 'two boys in funny clothes' sitting on her bed. Running downstairs she returned with her parents, who later commented on the chill, eerie atmosphere in the room. Nothing was found, and the matter was later reported to the Governor of the Tower.

This extra awareness seems to be possessed, not only by children, but also by animals. In 1979 the poodle owned by a yeoman warder living in the Casemates would growl and bark while staring up at Northumberland's Walk, That stretch of inner wall battlements adjoins the Martin Tower wherein Ambrose Rookwood, one of the Gunpowder Plotters, was imprisoned and interrogated prior to being hanged, drawn and quartered, and it overlooks the site of the rifle range in which enemy spies were shot; so who knows just what caused the poodle's hackles to rise?

From poodles to labradors, two of which lived in a house on Tower Green in the early 1980s. Their owners, a yeoman warder and his wife, were awaked at one thirty in the morning by a gentle knocking on their bedroom door. The sound grew louder and more insistent, but on opening the door, no-one was there. Although everything was checked for the possible cause of the noise, radiators, loose window catches, etc., the knocking continued until four o'clock, the two dogs meanwhile barking so wildly that eventually they had to be shut in the kitchen.

The houses surrounding Tower Green, in the very heart of the castle, look out on to the private execution site, and in earlier centuries provided the accommodation for some of the doomed prisoners. One house in particular stands on the site of that occupied by Lady Jane Grey before her decapitation by the axe, and in the 1920s Nellie and her family moved there from the Bloody Tower. Coming home with friends one night, they walked across the cobbles, then stopped as, approaching the house, they saw the face of a young girl looking out of Nellie's bedroom window. Entering the house they hastily told her parents and a search was immediately instituted but, as usual, no trace of anything untoward was discovered, and the episode became yet another unsolved entry in the Tower records.

Part of the shock caused by a supernatural experience is the sheer unexpectedness of it, even though one's training has been to prepare one not to be caught unawares. Even yeoman warders and Army sentries are initially taken aback, but because of their service background quickly recover and react with their usual efficiency. And so, when a tall dark figure appeared near the Martin Tower in the small hours of the morning and seen to 'drift' down the adjacent steps, no time was lost in turning out the guard and conducting a widespread search of the entire area. Alas, the search proved fruitless - as was a similar one some years ago, in the 1970s, when a sentry became aware of a crouching figure watching him from behind the locked glass entrance doors of the Waterloo Block. The silhouette was unmistakeable, being outlined by a bright light behind the figure, and even as the sentry stared, the shape moved away. Despite his fright the soldier acted promptly, summoning assistance and, with other members of the guard, searched the locked building from top to bottom, and had any living person been hiding there, he would certainly have been detected and apprehended.

In 2002 I was contacted by the Officer of the Guard in the Tower, who related an occurrence involving one of his sentries who, while on post facing the Wakefield Tower in the middle of the previous night, suddenly saw the figure of a man wearing a hat and long dark coat mounting the steps leading up from the base of that tower. On

reaching ground level the ‘man’ turned left under the archway leading to the Inner Ward. The sentry, aware that all the Wakefield doors were locked and that rationally there could not have been anyone at the foot of those steps anyway, immediately called out the guard and a thorough search was carried out, with the almost inevitable negative result. I interviewed the somewhat shaken young soldier over the telephone and have no doubt whatsoever that he had seen what he said he had seen, inexplicable or not.

On other occasions, of course, the phenomenon is so ordinary and commonplace as to cause no unease at all - at first. What was more pleasant to the author and his wife than the smell of hot, freshly baked bread? Yet no-one was baking bread or cakes anywhere in the vicinity! Nothing wrong either, for a tourist visiting St John’s Chapel in the White Tower, to hear medieval music being played on the organ. Except that the Chapel doesn’t possess such an instrument! And who was the man seen at midday by a yeoman warder in the Waterloo Block not long ago? On entering a corridor the yeoman warder heard a voice say “Oh, sorry!". He turned, to see a man approaching the swing doors six paces away. One door being propped open, the man passed through and turned the corner. The yeoman warder, now curious, followed - to find no-one in sight, all other doors being locked and securely barred! He recalled that the figure, far from being clad in Tudor dress, wore an ordinary suit and a ‘wartime type’ brown trilby hat. The Waterloo Block is relatively modern, and did in fact house a German spy awaiting execution by firing squad in the Tower in 1941.

All being ex-Warrant Officers or Sergeant Majors, and therefore trained by their service background to be observant and not easily duped, yeoman warders can be relied on for detailed descriptions when necessary. So when, before dawn one October morning, a warder on his way to open the archway doors at the front entrance to the Tower, saw an unexpected figure ahead of him as he approached the Bloody Tower archway from Tower Green, he took good note of his appearance. A tall man, he said, wearing a long coat and a sort of floppy brimmed hat. Curious to know who was about so early, the warder sought to catch up with the man as he passed under the Bloody Tower; yet once through its arch, the warder looked to left and right along Water Lane, to see nothing at all along the full length of the roadway, only the high ballium walls on each side and the water lapping the steps of Traitors’ Gate.

But in case anyone should suspect that only the yeoman warders and soldiers are susceptible to such supernatural occurrences, let me relate the instance in the 1970s when two workmen unlocked the great wooden door of the Salt Tower one morning, only to hear the sound of footsteps on the floor above, footsteps which slowly paced

back and forth. Eventually the sound ceased, and it was a very reluctant pair of workmen who ventured up the spiral stairway to the chamber which had once housed badly tortured Jesuit priests - only to find an empty room, the dust lying undisturbed on the floor and ledges.

The same tower featured in yet another frightening episode a year later, when a young workman, having finished his task in the upper room, closed the door after him and started down the stairs. Halfway down the unlit spiral he suddenly heard the sound of stamping feet in the room he had just vacated. Thinking that some-one, somehow, had got in, he retraced his steps, only to find the room empty, the light still on (the switch being at ground level). It was then that understandable reaction set in and, pausing not, he fled from the Salt Tower. Meeting the author minutes later, he recounted his experience and we conducted a thorough search, but the sounds could not be duplicated by making the boards creak or windows slam; with the young man on the spiral stairs, only MY stamping feet could reproduce the sounds he had heard.

Another episode involved, not a workman, but a postman, delivering mail to the Tower families. A hundred yards from the Well Tower, a small tower on the outer wall, he saw a yeoman warder in blue undress uniform sitting on the steps outside its front door. Such an everyday sight at 10.30 in the morning was far from unusual, but as he got nearer he saw that the warder was no longer there. Somewhat surprised, he spoke to another warder some little distance away, who explained that HE was the only one on duty in that area, and that the Well Tower had been empty and locked up for years.

Coincidentally the Well Tower had been a residence in the 1960s, and the yeoman warder's wife who had lived there related to me how she had been pushed out of bed by unseen hands one night, to land unceremoniously on the floor! On telling her husband - for they occupied separate beds - he informed her that the same thing had happened to him on the previous night!

So physical contact is also a manifestation, and was experienced by a London Tourist Board Guide who, as he left St John's Chapel in the White Tower, distinctly felt a hand grasp his shoulder and squeeze it twice. Expecting it to be a colleague, he swung round, only to find nobody near him. Similar supernatural mischief has also been practised on such inanimate, 20th century objects as radios and electrical appliances. In the Lanthorn Tower, manned by office staff, kettles and refrigerators were occasionally switched on, or off if already on, resulting in cold kettles and warm fridges! In an effort to thwart the playful spirits, the switches were taped over - but later were still found to have been operated!

Perhaps the most inexplicable and blood-chilling visitation in the 1970s occurred in the Royal Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, the last resting place of the three executed queens and those decapitated on Tower Hill. As related to the author by the chapel's organist not long after it had happened, late one evening he was practising in the darkened chapel, the only illumination coming from the small organ light immediately above the music rack. Whilst playing, he suddenly heard the heavy entrance door open and close and, assuming it to be a patrolling yeoman warder who had entered, he turned and looked over the organ screen. No-one was there, but as the last echoes of the organ chords died away, he looked up - to see a face, glowing eerily, about fourteen feet from the floor, against a supporting pillar near the chapel door. For seemingly minutes he stared unbelievingly at the apparition as it floated there, then saw it fade away. Badly shaken, he admitted that although he had frequently practised his music late at night, in future ALL the chapel lights would be on!

Ghostly occurrences similar to this have been experienced in other places within the castle, not only by residents or staff, but by tourists and passers-by, some of the reports dating back a century or more. Many residents live in the Tower for a considerable number of years yet encounter nothing untoward; others take such happenings in their stride, accepting them as inevitable consequences of the Tower's bloody history. But when all is said and done, remember - the Tower's ghosts don't really care whether YOU belive in them or not!

© G. Abbott

7 Kent Place
Kendal
Cumbria LA9 4EY
tel; 01539-727339
May 2004

Introduction

Be it summer or winter, daily the public pour in their thousands to Her Majesty's Tower of London. Jostling across the causeways over the moat they surge through the archways, their bright clothes contrasting with the grey walls, their incessant chatter penetrating the remotest cells of the prison towers. They bring their own holiday atmosphere with them as they swarm across Tower Green. Here a crowd listens enthralled to a yeoman warder, their 'Beefeater' guide, or stands impressed by the impassive sentry. Yonder the babel of many tongues echoes from the Jewel House approaches as the queue ebbs and flows. Coach parties noisily follow their hurrying leaders, children dash in vain to catch the perambulating pigeon – the scene is alive, a whirlpool of colour, of chatter and happy activity.

Yet when the last tourist is shepherded out beneath the By ward archway and the shadows start to lengthen across Tower Green, it almost seems as if the grey stone buildings shake off the traces of the day's artificiality.For night is the time for memories, and the Tower of London has indeed a surfeit of those. Happy ones, yes, of banquets and coronations, processions and merrymaking. But when the clouds scud across the moon and the wind sighs through the arrow slits, the fortress wraps its cloak of brooding isolation around itself, like an old enshawled woman staring into the embers. It is then that the evil memories of the past jostle to emerge.

Many have experienced the horror of those memories. A ghostly figure flits across the Green; footsteps ascend stairs untrodden by human feet; a luminescent cylinder hovers above a table; huge shadows of terrifying shapes appear on battlemented walls. Memories conjuring up the countless wretches who suffered the agony of thumbscrew and rack, who perished beneath the axe. Could they not return, to reproach and bewail?

This book gathers together some of the reports of apparitions seen, inexplicable noises heard. That there have been more, I do not doubt. Not everyone is brave enough to admit fear, the bloodchilling terror which turns one's feet to stone, when one's twentieth-century brain refuses to accept the sight, the sound, the sensation of … who knows?

I do not seek to explain them, nor even to comment on the truth of their ever happening. You may laugh when the sun is high over the

turrets, giggle with your friends as you ascend the spiral stairs in the Bloody Tower – sneer if you must as you crowd round the scaffold site.

But when the midnight mists wreathe low to shroud the battlements – when the dark cavities of turret windows watch sardonically like half-closed eyes – when the wind, leaning gently on the oaken doors, causes pendant chains to swing and clank … scoff not, but speed your stride and look not back!

HAUNTINGS IN THE TOWER
by
Yeoman Warder G. Abbott (retd)

It was a dark still night in October 1978 - so dark that had the patrolling sentry peered into the ravens' cages he would scarcely have been able to make out the feathered occupants. Not that the birds were asleep; they stirred restlessly, as if they had some fore-knowledge of the eerie events soon to take place. The time was just after ten o'clock. The great oak doors of the Tower of London had been slammed shut and locked firm, the ponderous hasps securing the castle and its unique treasures against possible intruders. The Queen's Keys, in accordance with the ancient ceremony enacted nightly for seven hundred years, had been challenged, then saluted and held secure in the Byward Tower at the castle's entrance. The bugle's brassy voice had echoed round the shadowed battlements and the little group of awed spectators to the Ceremony ushered out through the guarded postern gate. And the Norman fortress settled down for the night, leaving only the ever alert yeoman warders and sentries on duty.

One such sentry moved silently along his beat, a route which took him along the Outer Ward. This was the roadway between the inner and outer walls of the castle. The inner wall, thirty feet high and battlemented, connected some smaller towers, and was pierced at intervals by archways. These gave access to the area surrounding the central White Tower, the nine-century-old Norman Keep at the very heart of the fortress.

The sentry paused by one archway adjacent to the Wakefield Tower. Within its cold depths, on 21 May 1471, King Henry VI had been brutally stabbed to death whilst at prayer. The adjoining prison, the Bloody Tower, had also witnessed anguish and sudden death. There Sir Walter Raleigh had been caged for many a long year; there the two young Princes were savagely exterminated. The evil Judge Jeffries chose death by an excess of brandy rather than by the axe, and also within its walls Sir Thomas Overbury succumbed to the corrosive poisons administered to him by his enemy the Countess of Essex.

The sentry know nothing of this. He and his colleagues would be on duty here for forty-eight hours and would then return to their barracks in the City, to be replaced by yet another regiment.

Beyond this archway stretched the grassy slope, a thin layer of autumn leaves covering it. All was quiet. There was no known reason why this particular area should have a sinister reputation, any more

than anywhere else in the Tower, yet it was but five years or so earlier that a sentry of the Scots Guards had been on duty at that very spot. He had been aware of something moving, something that had the shape of a cloaked figure. The shape had emerged from the shadows, to be promptly challenged by the sentry. Receiving no reply, again the challenge came - a challenge that was stopped mid-breath, as the figure was seen to have no head! That particular episode ended with the soldier receiving first-aid for his distraught condition. Despite an exhaustive search, no trace was ever found of the headless intruder.

Such reports of course were not passed on through the regiments over the years and so there was nothing to alarm the sentry on duty on the night in question. Like a wraith himself, he moved along the roadway between the two high walls eyes probing the darkened arrow slits the pools of shadows between the old cannons which bordered the path. Suddenly, with a sharp 'click', a small stone struck his boot. Thinking that he had kicked it, he continued his patrol. Two, three paces further on, another stone hit his foot, followed by yet another. Then one hit him on the leg! He froze into immobility. The small missiles seemed to come from the wall on his left, the high battlements linking the Wakefield Tower with the Lanthorn Tower. He knew that all his colleagues were either resting or on duty - and in the Tower of London no-one played jokes on armed sentries!

Curious rather than apprehensive, he retraced his steps until, at the end of his beat, he met his companion pacing the adjoining beat. A few half-whispered words - and the two men changed places. The new sentry stepped out, half-doubting, yet wary. A practical man, he was more concerned about the possible damage flying stones might inflict on his highly-polished boots! Half a dozen paces - a few more - and then a stone struck his ankle, to clatter away across the well-worn cobbles! The Orders for the Guard were clear and well-defined; anything unusual must be reported immediately. The sentry made a quick decision; the sergeant's sceptical disbelief would have to be risked - this WAS unusual!

The senior NCO was not sceptical. Together with other NCOs and soldiers, they searched the area. There was no trace of any living person. The wall in question was over a hundred yards long and thirty feet high. Even more significant, it was eight feet thick, thus effectively ruling out the possibility of anyone on the other side of the wall lobbing stones over the top. The size of the stones, coupled with the trajectory required, eliminated the chance of hitting the feet of a moving target with any degree of accuracy. That anyone could have been on top of the wall was also out of the question. The only access was through the Wakefield Tower, but its two ground level doors were locked and its upper door, at battlement level, had an additional iron

barred gate secured across it.

The sergeant, puzzled yet satisfied with the thoroughness of his search, ordered resumption of the normal patrols. He resolved however to carry out random checks throughout the night, a resolve which was to lead HIM into a perplexing and eerie situation. But that was not until two more sentries had had their nerves tested!

Midnight was striking as these two approached the archway beneath the Bloody Tower. This archway, for long the only entrance to the Inner Ward, the precincts of the royal families, was also the dreaded route trodden by the doomed prisoners. These tragic figures, queens and princesses, archbishops and aristocrats, entered via Traitors' Gate and thence through the Bloody Tower archway to their prison towers, many later to suffer death 'neath the descending axe. Now the archway stood dimly lit in the cold still night. A pigeon stirred in a wall crevice nearby as the two sentries passed beneath the raised portcullis. Suddenly both men shivered, the hair on the back of their necks bristling. For a long moment they halted, experiencing a sensation of indescribable terror - then, unheralded, an icy gust of air blew through the archway with violence sufficient to whip their short capes up over their heads!

As quickly as the men reacted, the wind dropped and all was still again. Bewildered they stared around. There was nothing sinister to be seen, other than the stone gargoyles looking down enigmatically at them from the inner alcoves of the archway, stone faces which had watched the splendour and panoply, the misery and despair of the historic figures who had passed beneath them over six hundred centuries.

One man shrugged his shoulders. How could you report a cool breeze and a spooky feeling? How indeed?! Although it must be said that they weren't as badly frightened as a certain Guards Officer in the 1930s. He was stationed at the Tower of London and was returning to the Officers' Mess there late one night. Passing under the Bloody Tower he felt a most peculiar and utterly distasteful sensation which filled him with an intense desire to escape from that spot. His mind went completely blank. Next moment, or so it seemed to him, he found himself three hundred yards away on the steps of the Mess, gasping for breath, his heart pounding wildly.

So over the centuries, little has changed - or had the visitations from the other world no knowledge of earthly time? The Sergeant of the Guard certainly had, when, on this night in October 1978, he escorted the Officer of the Guard on his rounds of inspection. It was two a.m. All sentries had been checked and found alert and watchful. The lights burned bright in the barracks in the Waterloo Block where solders were preparing for their next tour of duty; otherwise the great fortress

slept. The mournful noise of a ship's hooter sounded distantly, echoing from the gaunt empty warehouses which lined the river's banks.

The officer and his sergeant passed through the Bloody Tower archway without incident. To their right stood part of a thirteenth century rampart, crumbling and derelict. Its once sharply defined arrow slits had deteriorated into gaping cavities through which the verdant lawn gleamed as the moon slipped out from behind a cloud. Beyond it the White Tower soared high and majestic, and as the two men paused to look up at that building, the sergeant suddenly gripped his rifle tightly as, only yards away, a huge shadow moved along the face of the ancient wall! They watched wide-eyed as it seemed to writhe sinuously, its shape changing as the broken, jagged surface of stone altered its blurred outline!

The men swung round to scan behind them. But nothing moved, nothing that could have created such an apparition. As if drawn by magnetism their gaze returned to the wall, where the gigantic shadow continued to traverse its length, finally merging with the darkness at the base of the Wakefield Tower. Both men, pulses racing, searched again for its possible cause - but the Tower of London guards its secrets jealously and their search proved abortive.

A grey dawn brought daylight edging over the battlements, glancing off the flint-clad walls, the diamond-paned windows of the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula, wherein lie the bones of three executed Queens of England and many other victims. The sentry yawned and thought of breakfast. It had been a long night. Round the corner, from his quarters in the Tower's casemates, came a yeoman warder, one of the historic body of men who for over nine centuries have been custodians of the royal fortress. It was six thirty am, time for him to unlock and swing open the great oak doors and thereafter control entry of those authorised to do so. The sentry, silent for long enough, related the night's adventure to his new companion. "The stones actually hit my feet" he exclaimed 'And because I could hardly believe it, I collected some of them - and here they are!"

I was the yeoman warder on duty that morning; I have those very stones in front of me as I pen this account! And as I look at them, I wonder; who - or what - held them before the sentry picked them up ……?!!!!!

Ghosts!

In the sunlight 'tis easy to swagger and strut
To push on a door that is carelessly shut.
But evening will bring just the hint of a query
Turning reason awry and producing an eerie
Dominion of doubt where once certainty stood –
What lies just beyond that great portal of wood?
Is it fiercesome or gentle? – rapid or slow?
Wilt thou brazenly enter – or tarry – or go?
I'll not wait for thine answer
But meet thee below …!

You can, if you wish, say they don't exist. However, things happen in the Tower which cannot be explained away, and which were reported, moreover, by responsible, trained observers – yeoman warders, guards and sentries on patrol. After all, why shouldn't events, sad or otherwise, impress themselves on an atmosphere so that their images are still Visible' centuries later, like ink on blotting paper? And if those events gave rise to highly charged emotions at the time, could not the moans, the screams, the footsteps, continue to echo down the ages?

After the publication of my book on the Tower's ghosts, I received many new reports of supernatural happenings, a few of which I include here. I make no attempt to explain them; I am a retired yeoman warder, not a psychic investigator! Interestingly enough, the visitations don't always restrict themselves to the traditional 'haunting' times after dark. This is fortuitous, allowing the witness to observe details – if not too unnerved!

Events which occurred in the presence of more than one person were related to me by Mr George Trott, who lived for some time in the Martin Tower. This tower once housed the Crown Jewels and was the scene of the attempted robbery by Colonel Blood in 1671, and supernatural happenings were reported there in the last century. Mr Trott took up residence, with his father and mother, in 1921; and from there he relates

> My father, mother and I moved into the top living quarter of the Martin Tower, taking it over from yeoman warder Smoker and his wife. They told us they had heard footsteps coming up the inside stairs to the top quarter but when they opened the door there was never anyone there.

Yeoman warder Curtis VC and his wife lived in the downstairs quarter and next day they took us all over the Martin Tower and told us about the footsteps so my mother told me not to be alarmed about it. When my cousin came to live with us she told him the same.

After about five days or so we had just settled down for an evening meal when we heard footsteps so my father thought it was Mr Curtis or his wife and he opened the door of the kitchen/living room and there was no one there. The footsteps stopped. We carried on with our meal and later I went to bed.

Now about the second Sunday night we heard the footsteps and they came up to the door – and the door opened – but there was nobody there! My mother looked out and my father checked the downstairs doors which were locked, including the door leading to the battlements. The door between the downstairs and upstairs was also locked. Dad called yeoman warder Curtis and told him about it and he said 'So you've had your visitor – it won't be long before you hear the footsteps again!'.

Dad got the foreman of the Ministry of Works to check the door and had a lock which had a sliding catch fitted underneath. Meanwhile Dad had told Sir George (Keeper of the Jewels) and Lady Younghusband and she visited mother and had a good talk. She said she had a friend in Cambridge who was interested in such 'goings on' as she called them.

Later on the footsteps came up the stairs again. Dad had locked the door and put the catch on. The footsteps stopped – and the door opened! The lock and catch were still in the locked position, we were amazed! Dad looked round the Tower again, everything was secure, so he relocked the door.

About the third week in November 1921, Lady Younghusband brought two gentlemen with her and introduced them to us. They also met Mr and Mrs Curtis, and then they checked the tower from top to bottom. They also looked up the history of the Martin Tower.

My mother said that next time the door opened she would say 'Come in Mary' and tell me to shut the door.

Nothing happened for a few days, until the last Sunday in November. One of the gentlemen was with us, and he took Dad and Mr Curtis with him when he locked the two

main doors and the side doors to the tower, and the door between the upstairs and downstairs. We settled down for a late meal about 7.45pm (I was allowed to stay up on Sundays).

Mother was at the stove, I was reading, Dad and the gentleman were talking – when the footsteps came up the stairs!

The door was locked and the bottom catch on. The footsteps stopped – and the door opened! My mother said 'Come in, Mary – close the door, George!'. But the gentleman said 'No, stay still'. He looked at a thermometer and two more instruments and took readings. He then went with Dad and checked all doors, which were found still locked. They went to the top of the tower, all secure.

We all settled down after that, and I went to bed while they had a drink and a chat. Sir George and Lady Younghusband came over, and a report was sent to the Resident Governor.

When my cousin came to live with us he soon got used to the footsteps and door opening; they wanted to change the door but my mother said leave it, as she was quite happy with 'Mary calling'. She said the footsteps were light so it must be a lady calling.

Later we moved out, and the Ministry of Works' officers took over. One of the staff called on mother and told her that he had heard more than once footsteps coming up the stairs and stopping outside, and when he called out 'Come in' nobody came, and no one was there. My mother told him to tell everyone else not to worry, it was only Mary calling.

By a strange coincidence another holder of the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery, was also involved in an eerie occurrence on the other side of the Tower Green in what is now called the Queen's House. This sixteenth-century dwelling has housed many historic prisoners, Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, Guy Fawkes, William Penn and others, and is the house of the Resident Governor.

Colonel Burges VC held this post in 1923 and, as related by George Trott, had gone to bed early one night. He was reading, when he heard footsteps come down the corridor and stop outside his bedroom. He thought it was his batman and so told him to come in, but the footsteps carried on down the corridor. The next day he asked his batman about this and was told that he had not been upstairs. Later on the same thing happened again, so the colonel had an alarm switch

fitted and when it occurred again, he pressed the button and the soldier on duty below came running up. As he reached the corridor he heard the footsteps moving along ahead of him. The whole house was searched and everything found secure. The yeoman warder on watch duty reported the matter to Chief Warder Smoker, and though it happened again, Colonel Burges never seemed to worry about it.

However, in 1933 he was replaced by Colonel Faviell DSO, who was told about the mysterious footsteps. Some time afterwards his wife, who had forgotten all about the story, was in bed when the footsteps passed her door. She thought it was one of the soldiers visiting her maid, so spoke to her about it. The maid denied it and so Mrs Faviell had the workmen check all the doors and locks. Not only was the alarm switch overhauled, but it was arranged that when Mrs Faviell opened the bedroom door, all the lights along the corridor would come on.

A few nights later, as she lay in bed, the footsteps approached. Getting up, she pressed the alarm switch, alerting the soldier on duty below. He locked the front door and ran up the stairs. Meanwhile, Mrs Faviell had opened the bedroom door flooding the corridor with light – and revealing nothing else, although the footsteps continued along the corridor! Bravely she ran after 'whoever it was' but the footsteps suddenly stopped. More soldiers were summoned and a search was made, but as usual nothing was found.

But all that happened many years ago and could have been creaking floorboards! What about actual sightings, recently? Well, in January 1982, at 4.30am, the yeoman warder on watch was in the Byward Tower. This guardroom has been manned day and night by the warders and their predecessors for over seven hundred years, and the Watchman was the only one on duty at that time. He sat opposite the huge stone fireplace, which now houses a gas-fire. Two electric lights were on, one at each end of the small guardroom.

The front cover of a guide book published in 1884

Suddenly he became aware of a buzzing sound, like that of a fly.

Looking up he saw, not the gas-fire, but a roaring fire of logs or coal. In front of it stood two men, side by side. They both had beards, and he noted their spindly legs, as if they were wearing breeches and stockings. The bright glare of the fire prevented him noticing any details of their dress. They appeared to be talking to each other, and then suddenly one moved his head, to lean forward and stare at the dumbstruck warder! Next minute both men vanished. The gas-fire reappeared, leaving the Watchman to collect his senses and hope for the dawn's early arrival. There is one fascinating point on which to ponder – if the 'man' leant forward and saw the Watchman: who thought who was a ghost?

Before the public are admitted to the grounds, the White Tower staff sweep the floors and prepare for the coming day's rush of tourists. At 8.05 one morning in 1978, a warden thus engaged noticed a woman through one of the tall glass showcases. Puzzled by a stranger's presence at that time of day, he went towards her, only to see her move through an archway into the next room. Yet when he arrived there it was empty, and the only way out was up a spiral stair to the chapel. He climbed the narrow stairway and reached the heavy oak door to the chapel to find it securely locked, and although a search was carried out, the results were negative.

Another incident in the White Tower occurred in September 1980, when the night security guard was patrolling. It was 11.15pm and the guard was approaching the spiral stairway which connects the vaults with the uppermost floors. As he started to go down, he was aware of a woman to his left, going up. He had taken two steps further down before he realised what he had seen, so he turned and ascended. He found nothing, all doors ahead of him being locked securely, and he had all the keys!

He described later how he had been unable to see the upper half of her body for she had leant forward climbing the steep circular stairs and so was rounding the newel post. However, he distinctly saw that she was wearing a black and grey panelled skirt. Again, a thorough search of the eleventh-century building revealed nothing.

Finally, I include an experience that was recounted to me by a gentleman who would prefer to be known by the initials JHW. Although somewhat unnerved at the time, his profession required him to have an eye for detail, coupled with a photographic recall of memory. I quote the report in his own words to preserve spontaneity.

> Though I have passed by the rear of the Tower hundreds of times, this was the only time I felt or saw anything. It was 7.30am on 11 March 1980, a slightly misty morning. As I was approaching Traitors' Gate I noticed a blue light

which was flickering and therefore drew my attention.

On looking down I was amazed to see a group of people in what appeared to be Tudor dress. There were about eight or more of them. Leading the procession was a very big man dressed in a leather apron, closely followed by two men carrying pikes or something like that, then two more men very well dressed. They wore red velvet with gold thread or brocade, and one had a small ruff, also a lace collar under the ruff. One seemed to be red headed and had a small beard, the other dark, no hat, and a small beard, his costume came up to his neck, no ruff, long puffed sleeves and several rings on his fingers. One man had a long gold chain.

Behind them were two women in their early twenties, both very richly clothed. One seemed to be dressed in grey material, silk and brocaded, with a low neckline. Both women had a small tiara, what appeared to be rows of pearls shaped like a crescent on the crown of their heads. The other woman's dress was of a brownish colour. Both had necklets of pearls, double loops, also a golden chain and pendant of some sort, long sleeves but without frills. The hair of one was sort of auburn, the other brown. Both dresses were studded with pearls, diamonds, etc, and gold thread or something like it.

The woman in brown was holding a box against her chest with both hands. It was quite a small box, more of a casket than a box. The woman in grey was clasping a prayer book with a cross on it.

Following them were two more men carrying pikes. They were dressed the same as the other pikemen, with black hats and capes or cloaks.

The figures seemed to be gliding along as in a boat on the water, and the blue light was above them and seemed to move with the figures, growing fainter all the time they were in view.

The impression only lasted about a minute or two, then there was some movement along the wharf and they all vanished like a puff of smoke.

I cannot say if what I saw was real or not, but I can assure you I don't want to see it again, for it left me feeling greatly puzzled and feeling a great deal of sadness, also very cold. I have had many sleepless nights since then, it is a welcome to have happened in daylight and not at night which could have had a disastrous effect.

> However, at no time did I feel any menacing or evil feeling towards me, only as I have already said, a feeling of overwhelming sadness and coldness.
>
> As well as being an observer, I felt that someone or something was also observing me, to what purpose one cannot tell. In my case there was no fear, but a knowledge that I was privileged to see it. I can only say once more I hope never to see anything like it anymore.

So don't think that supernatural happenings occur only at night, to guards and warders. Once you are in the grounds of the Tower, at any time of the day, you are just as likely to sense a touch on the shoulder, half see a shape rounding the corner, perhaps hear the echoes of a stifled scream …

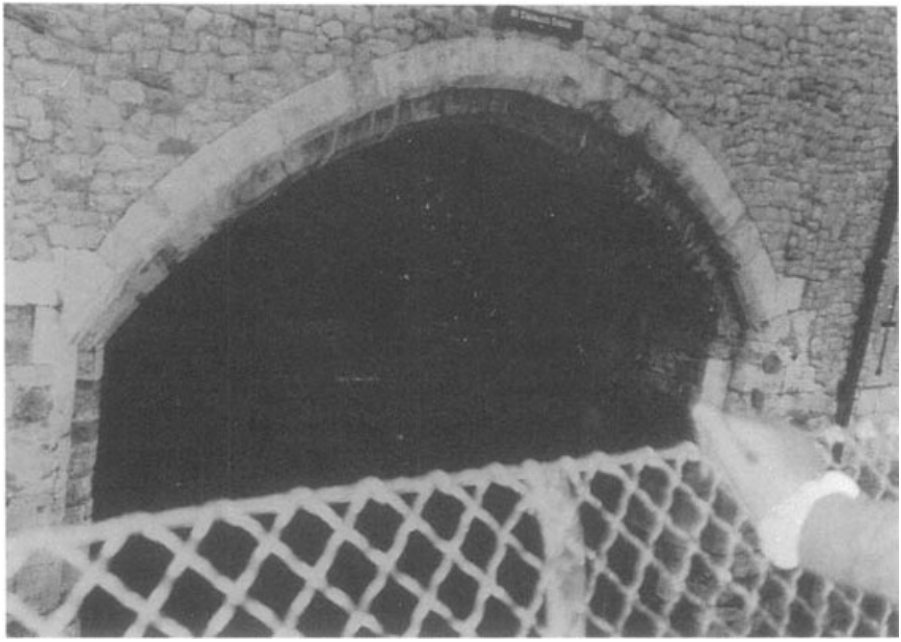
After all, why should *you* be exempt?

The Ghostly Hand at Traitors' Gate

In December 1994 Shannon John, an attractive young American student, was one of a school group who came to this country to study Tudor history. In London they indulged in the inevitable round of sight-seeing, visiting such national institutions as the National Portrait Gallery, St Paul's Cathedral, the Bank of England and then like so many others, they came to the Tower of London. But when the list had earlier been compiled of places the group just had to see, little did Shannon and her family imagine in their wildest dreams that this was going to be an experience they had never expected – for only yards from the office blocks and speeding traffic of modern London, there, among the crowds of tourists on Tower Wharf, someone from a bygone age was very, very close to Shannon!

I first became involved in the story when my colleague Yeoman Warder Brian Harrison, knowing of my research and subsequent books on the Tower's ghosts, forwarded a letter to me from Shannon's father, Mr Arthur D John of Redlands, California in which he enclosed a photograph of Traitors' Gate taken by his daughter and enquired whether we could account for the gloved hand which mysteriously appeared in the picture.

To say that I was intrigued is putting it mildly, for while I had on record many cases in which spectres had apparently appeared to people, ghostly sounds heard and even inexplicable odours, incense etc., smelled, this was the first occasion of which I was aware, of such a manifestation being reportedly captured on film! Caution of course was necessary that it was not a hoax, a technical malfunction, a double exposure or the like, and on discussing it by phone with Mr John I was reassured that it was indeed a bona fide request for enlightenment and not a stunt for publicity (if it were, it would have appeared in American newspapers and not queried at all with the Tower authorities, who would have simply dismissed it as such). A print of the picture providing few clues as to whether it was genuine or not, Mr John offered to send the original roll of film, as the negative concerned and those immediately adjoining it were of course essential for evaluation.



The ghostly hand at Traitors' Gate

On its receipt, I accepted the risk of being greeted with ribald scepticism and invited not only military photo-interpretation experts for an assessment, but later also the manufacturers of the film, they having the specialist equipment necessary to investigate the authenticity or otherwise of the negative. This they did thoroughly, over a lengthy period, and although they were necessarily wary of attributing the hand as being of supernatural origin, their conclusions can be summed up as follows;

1. 'The hand was not the result of a double exposure'. Comment: this was also confirmed by study of the other negatives on the roll.
2. 'Despite enlarging, then darkening the picture to varying degrees, the hand was still visible, surrounded by a strange glowing halo, especially round the thumb, this resembling the electro-fluorescent photographs interpreted by some as the 'aura' which surrounds us all, its colour signifying our mood e.g. blue for sadness, orange for happiness.' Also, as will be seen by the illustration, while the railings are out of focus, the end of the sleeve itself, the wrinkles in the material and the outline of the fingers are clearly delineated, yet both are the same distance from the lens.
   Comment: point taken.
3. 'The image of the hand was present in the scene when the photo was taken and had not been subsequently superimposed by computer or any other method.'
   Comment: obviously an undisputed technical conclusion. Mr John also

stressed that Shannon did not have the technical knowledge required to fake a picture in that way.

5. 'A hand could have intruded and been captured by the flash to give that luminescent effect, a known but rare phenomenon.'
   Comment: Shannon said that there were only herself and a friend in the immediate area and she did not use the flash on her 'point and press' camera. Nor is the lacy Tudor or Stuart style cuff worn by the 'hand' the usual fashion adopted by touring students! Even had someone obtained a sleeve as a joke, the wearer would have instinctively curled their fingers round the railings in the picture. Close examination shows that this is not the case. If the hand is of an era long since gone, the fingers could not have curled round the railings anyway, because they weren't there, having only installed about a century ago to prevent people falling into the water below.

   Several questions remain unanswered and are probably unanswerable anyway. The posture of the hand itself is unusually awkward, as attempts to curl the fingers in that manner, yet keep the thumb line straight, will demonstrate. Was the owner of the hand a man or a woman? Was he or she wearing a glove? – there appears to be wrinkles on the first finger and no thumb nail is visible. Was it a coincidence that the manifestation occurred where it did, at Traitors' Gate, the entrance through which the doomed victims were brought, to face lengthy incarceration or even death beneath the axe? It was certainly at the precise spot where, as I recounted in my book *Beefeaters of the Tower of London*, at 7.30a.m. on 11 March 1980 a passer-by witnessed and described in great detail a procession of Tudor-clad men and women, the men bearing pikes, the women resplendent in dresses studded with pearls and diamonds, one carrying a prayer book with a cross on it, the party passing slowly, as if in a barge, under Traitors' Gate and proceeding into the Tower. Had he seen a phantom re-enactment of the moments when Queen Katherine Howard, accompanied by four ladies and conveyed in a small boat rowed by four men, passed under Traitors' Gate on 10 February 1542, Katherine dying beneath the axe later on Tower Green? My informant reported that his attention was first attracted by a flickering haze of blue light beneath the archway; could it have been a glow similar to that which surrounded the 'hand'? So whose hand was it? We will never know. I have only one regret – that Miss Shannon John wasn't standing back sufficiently far enough to film whoever was on the Other' end of the sleeve!

Skeleton found near The Lanthorn Tower

The Phantom of the Waterloo Block

It was 3 a.m. on a cold morning in September 1980 and the sentry patrolling along the front of the Waterloo Block suddenly had the feeling that he was being watched. His colleagues were fifty yards or more away, walking their beats, everywhere was in darkness save for a glimmer of light through the arrow slits of the White Tower opposite, the brightest lights of all being those shining out through the large windows in the upper halves of the double doors of the Waterloo Block itself, lights which clearly illuminated the entrance hall beyond. Being a member of a Guards Regiment, he was not given to reacting to unusual circumstances in any other way than that of a highly trained sentry; those on duty in the Tower, whether soldiers or yeoman warders, the latter all being ex-Warrant Officers or Sergeant Majors, could hardly be classed as being susceptible to nerves, and their role was to observe and investigate anything out of the ordinary, especially at night.

Reaching the extremity of his beat at the end of the long building, the soldier turned about, his sixth sense still sending out warning signals. His eyes probing the shadows, he suddenly found himself looking at the Waterloo Block doors - to see through the glass windows a shape outlined by the strong lights behind, a silhouette of a man crouching and watching him! For a moment the soldier froze, his hands gripping his rifle; he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that those doors, indeed all the doors, both internal and external, were securely locked. A thief would hardly stand in a brightly lit hallway, yet how could a member of staff or even a tourist, have been inadvertently locked in? Before he could think up a rational explanation, the shape moved away, and at that the sentry acted in accordance with his instructions; using his radio he called out the guard, and also the Armouries warden responsible for night security. His sergeant and colleagues quickly arrived, together with the warden who unlocked the doors. Not surprisingly the sentry was more than reluctant to enter the building, but within minutes, the possibility of terrorism being an constant threat, the whole building was subjected to a minute and thorough search by the armed soldiers for any unauthorised person on the premises. All security devices were checked, all rooms searched, but nothing untoward was found. The sentry, questioned extensively by the Officer of the Guard, as was the routine, could not be diverted from his story and the incident was entered in the Report Book as inexplicable.

Equally inexplicable were the events which occurred on the upper

floor of the Block, where flats occupied by yeoman warders, Jewel House members and their families were situated. Security being the top priority at all times, all the residents were required to lock outer doors behind them on entering or leaving the building at night, yet during 1979 and the following year, two yeoman warders described how, at different times in the night and sometimes as early as 7 a.m., loud knocking was heard at their 'front' doors, entrances which opened on to a long corridor. No matter how quickly they reached their front doors, no-one was ever there. That they were the activity of some practical joker was discounted, such childish practices not being indulged in by fellow warders, and anyway, there were only three or four families along that corridor so any miscreant could easily be identified. However, both yeoman warders reported that on several occasions, on opening their doors and looking along the corridor, the swing doors further along were seen to be swinging slightly, as if someone had just passed through them – yet on investigation all the doors beyond were found to be securely locked, as were those in the opposite direction. These incidents continued for some months and then, as mysteriously as they had started, the knocking suddenly ceased.

An even more baffling event occurred on 30 July 1980 involving another yeoman warder who occupied a flat on the second floor at the east end of the Waterloo Block. On leaving his apartment and closing the door, he suddenly heard a voice say "Oh - sorry!" and on turning, saw a man standing by the swing doors situated about six paces away. Next moment the man had moved away, passing through the aperture where one swing door had been propped open. It was mid-day, broad daylight in the corridor and members of staff not immediately recognised did pass through the building, so there was nothing unusual about the incident – why should there be? And then the warder thought again; where was the fellow going? Following the route the man had taken, he found what he had subconsciously expected – that every room leading off the spiral stairs at the end of the corridor, both up and down the stairway, were securely locked, mainy of them barred as well. When questioned, the description he gave was not of a ghostly, be-ruffed Tudor courtier or Cavalier dandy – but of a man who wore an ordinary looking suit and a wartime-type brown pointed trilby hat!

This incident gave rise to much speculation, following as it did, an occurrence two months or so earlier when, at 4.15 a.m. on the morning of 24 April 1980, two patrolling sentries saw what they described as 'a tall dark figure' at the east end of the Waterloo Block. They immediately gave chase, pursuing the figure down the stone steps leading to the Casemates, the area between the two encircling

walls, but found no trace of an intruder. Another sentry had also heard suspicious noises at that time and so the guard was called out and a thorough search made of the area, but with no positive results.

To ascertain the possible significance of these occurrences, whether linked or not, we must go back to the seventeenth century. Prior to 1694, the year in which the Grand Storehouse was built there, most of that area was the cemetery of the Royal Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula which is situated immediately to the west. The Storehouse, an imposing three storied building, was a vast depository of weapons sufficient to arm 60,000 men, together with thousands of historic artifacts, banners, drums, arrays of bayonets and pistols; even the surviving instruments of torture were displayed there. But on Saturday 30 October 1841 a devastating fire broke out in a small tower immediately behind it, a conflagration which eventually enveloped the Storehouse itself despite all the efforts of the Tower's fire brigade and those of the City. Thousands of Londoners lined the edge of the moat to watch the pall of smoke, the flames leaping high into the air, the collapsing roof and walls, and when dawn came there was little to see other than smouldering ruins.

The site was cleared completely and in preparing the foundations for a new building on the site, the remains of many bodies, including, it is believed, those of the alleged lovers of Queen Anne Boleyn, were found. As mentioned in another chapter, more remains were discovered in later years, all being re-interred in the Crypt.

The new building was the present Waterloo Block which, when completed in 1845, was called the Waterloo Barracks, its main use being to house the Tower's garrison of soldiers; it also contains offices, store rooms and as previously mentioned, accommodation for members of staff. Currently of course the Jewel House is also situated therein.

The building being so comparatively recent, the spectral 'crouching figure' and the knocking on the doors – if indeed they were supernatural occurrences -could possibly be attributed to eternally wandering spirits of long-dead medieval corpses still mouldering beneath the foundations although they would have hardly appeared as the man wearing a war-time type pointed trilby! On the other hand, all the reported phenomena could conceivably have been caused by the latter apparition, and the vital clue in this connection is that there was a prisoner actually held in the Waterloo Block, as recently as the Second World War. He was a German spy, Josef Jakobs, who was confined in a room in the upper floor at the east end of the Block – the same floor and in close proximity to where the 'man in the trilby' was sighted!

Josef Jakobs was born 30 June 1898 and on enlisting in the German

Army, rose to the rank of sergeant, attached to the Meteorological Branch. Selected as an espionage agent because of his knowledge of the English language, he was issued with the civilian clothing necessary to pass without suspicion in England, wireless transmitting equipment with which to communicate with his German base headquarters, and an identity card identifying him as James Rymer. He was given sufficient funds in English currency to enable him to pay for accommodation and purchase food and drink, and was also supplied with a bottle of brandy in the event of emergencies. For immediate sustenance on arrival, should that be necessary, he was given an item of food designed to evoke instant nostalgia – a traditional German sausage!

On the night of 31 January 1941, wearing a parachute, he boarded an aircraft which then took off and headed for southern England. Once over the estuary of the River Thames, the pilot navigated by following the course of the river as far as Gravesend and Greenhithe, then turned due north to drop his passenger over North Stifford, Essex. On descending, Jakobs, doubtless in trying to avoid dropping into the tree tops of a wood, made a heavy landing in a field nearby, breaking an ankle. Incapacitated, unable even to bury his parachute and flying kit with the small spade he carried, he was helpless to avoid capture by the Army personnel patrolling in the vicinity.

It being obvious from the equipment he carried that he was on a subversive mission, he was taken to Brixton Gaol where he received medical attention to his injured ankle. He was then interrogated by officers belonging to the counter-espionage branch and it soon became apparent that such was his loyalty and sense of patriotism, there was no question of him defecting and becoming a double agent. Seven months after his capture, on 4 August 1941, he faced a Court-Martial, and after hearing all the evidence, Jakobs was found guilty and sentenced to death.

He was taken to the Tower of London and, as stated above, was lodged in the Waterloo Block, guarded by soldiers of the Scots Guards. Early in the morning of 14 August 1941, he was escorted to the miniature rifle range which before its demolition stood only yards from the author's apartment in the Tower. There, seated in a chair (because of his injured ankle) he was executed by an eight man firing squad under the command of Major P D Waters M.C., five bullets piercing the circle of lint positioned over his heart. His body was taken to the Tower mortuary, a room situated in the outer wall of the east moat, beneath the approach road to Tower Bridge, where a post mortem was carried out, after which it was conveyed to St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green and there, after the appropriate funeral service, interred in a common grave.

The chair on which the spy sat when executed – note missing rung torn away by bullets.

Was he – could he have been – the ‘man in a trilby’ seen by the yeoman warder? The fact that words were spoken did not necessarily preclude ‘him’ from being an apparition; phantoms are sometimes quite vocal; unmistakeable screams have on occasion been heard emanating late at night from the execution site on Tower Green, and ghostly moans have also been reported from other places over the years. Were the knocks on the doors his appeals for help in escaping his prison? Was he the ‘crouching man’ at the Waterloo Block door who, on seeing an ‘enemy’ soldier through the window, turned away and disappeared? Could he have been the ‘tall dark figure’ seen by the two sentries vanishing down the steps to the Casemates – the route which led to the site of the rifle range? And does his spirit frequent that area as well? In 1979 a poodle owned by a yeoman warder’s family living opposite, took to staring at the place where the range once stood, barking and growling as if witnessing something only it could see. Whether the apparition was that of Josef Jakob or not, may he, a brave and loyal soldier who died for his country, find eternal peace.

The Spectre of the Spiral Stairway

'Whatever married man did not repent of his marriage, or quarrel in a year and a day after it, should go to his Priory and demand the promised flitch of bacon, on his swearing to the truth, kneeling on two stones in the church-yard'. That ancient tradition, still practised albeit rarely, dates back to the thirteenth century and was instituted by Lord Robert Fitzwalter. The prize was known as the Dunmow Flitch, the Priory in question being Dunmow Priory, situated in the Essex town of that name. Robert Fitzwalter was Lord of Dunmow, although he spent much of his time at his London address, Baynard's Castle, in Surrey, now long since demolished. However one can be quite certain that he would not have considered his Sovereign, King John, to be eligible for such a philanthropic award, for John, although married to Queen Isabella of Angouleme, harboured lustful thoughts directed towards a beautiful damsel called Maud, or Matilda, the Fair – for she happened to be Fitzwalter's daughter!

The King's improper advances were spurned by that young lady, but so determined was the monarch that in the year 1212 he had her kidnapped from the family home in Dunmow and brought to the Tower of London, where she was imprisoned in the round turret of the White Tower. On hearing of the dastardly deed, her outraged father sought to raise the other barons in revolt against the monarch, but failing in his efforts, he was forced to flee to France, his estates then being forfeited to the Crown.

As the months went by, John continued to force his unwanted attentions on Maud, but she refused to speak to him or even the courtiers who conveyed his ardent pleas. Eventually, determined that if he could not have her, no-one else should, he arranged that her food should include a poisoned egg and Maud, unsuspecting his murderous intent, ate it and died. Her body was taken back to Dunmow and interred in the family vault there.

When the news of her murder reached France, Lord Fitzwalter returned to England, to find that the barons were now on the brink of rising up against King John and Robert, placing himself at their head, was thereby instrumental in forcing the King to sign (actually to make his mark) on the Magna Carta at Runnymeade. So it could be said that the Charter which gave us all our civic freedom originated with a poisoned egg eaten in the White Tower by Maud the Fair!

But does her spirit still haunt that ancient building? One afternoon

in 1980 a London Tourist Board guide, conducting a party through the White Tower, reported that he had distinctly felt a hand grasp his shoulder and squeeze it twice. Assuming it was a tourist seeking his attention, he turned round immediately – to find no-one there, the members of his group being some yards away!

One man who actually did see 'someone' was an Armouries warden who, at five minutes past eight one morning in 1978, long before any visitors were admitted, was sweeping the floor in one of the rooms. As he was thus engaged he happened to look up and saw, through one of the glass display cases, a woman. Puzzled at her presence, he walked round the cabinet and saw her move through an archway and round the corner into the next room. On following her he saw that there was no-one there, and as the only way out was up the spiral stairs, he ascended them, only to find that the door at the top, leading into the Chapel Royal of St John, was locked and bolted. Summoning his colleagues, the whole area was searched, but no sign of the woman was ever found.

That episode, occurring as it did, in broad daylight, must have been disturbing enough, but the incident experienced by a night security guard on duty in the White Tower at 11.15 pm one night in September 1980 was enough to make his pulses race faster than usual, as he admitted to me when, on the following day, he described what happened. He had entered via an upper storey and then approached the spiral stairway which connects the various floors. As he started to go down he suddenly became aware, out of the corner of his eye, of a woman going up. She seemed to be leaning forward as she mounted the stairs, for the upper half of her body was obscured by the newel post, the thick stone centre pillar of the stairway, but he recalled that she was wearing a long black and grey skirt of some kind. Before he had really comprehended exactly what he had seen, he had taken a further two steps downwards, so he immediately turned back and ascended. Climbing as quickly as he could, his adrenalin flowing, and trying to see round each bend in the stairs before reaching there, eventually he reached the top – to find himself facing a locked door! He confessed afterwards that although completely mystified, he was relieved that the apparition had not turned round and come down again to meet him!

So could it have been the ghost of the young girl, so brutally murdered for refusing to yield to the King, who one morning had alarmed the warden sweeping the floor? Was it her hand that had touched the guide's shoulder? Could it really have been Maud the Fair who in the dead of night was seen mounting the spiral stairs? It may have been – for beyond that locked door was the round turret!

The Stone-Throwing Ghost

Joining the Wakefield and the Lanthorn Towers on the south side of the Fortress is a forty-foot high crenellated wall approximately six feet wide, and access to the top of it can only be gained via the doorways in each of the two towers. At about 8.30 pm on the moonless night of 19 October 1978 the sentry patrolling between the inner and outer walls in that area suddenly became aware of small stones hitting his legs and boots. The security lights were on, and there was no-one in the vicinity. He continued his patrol, only to experience further stones, thrown singly, striking his legs. Mystified – and doubtless hoping to avoid further scratches on his highly polished boots! – he called to his colleague on the adjoining beat and asked him to change over; on doing so, he too was peppered with small stones. At that, the men decided to call out the guard and on their arrival, as usual, the area was scrupulously searched, with negative results. There was no wind whatsoever, so the stones could not have been blown from the top of the inner wall, the direction from which the stones came; the doors at both ends of the wall-walk were not only bolted and secured but also had additional barred gates locked across them. On inspecting the wall-walk nothing could be found to arouse suspicion and the dust on it lay undisturbed.

Even more baffling was the fact that the trajectory of the stones was such that no-one standing on the other side of the wall could possibly have thrown the stones to clear the top of the wall and score hits so accurately on a moving target. Nor could anyone have stood there without being seen by the night security guard whose office was situated on the ground floor of the Lanthorn Tower on that side of the wall.

The author, going on duty nearby at 6.15 am the following morning was not only given a full account of the night's events, but was also given three of the flinty missiles – and holding them in my hand, I sometimes wonder who – or what – held them before they struck the sentry's legs – perhaps a Tudor poltergeist?!

If so it could well have been the same one who, two years later, caused annoyance, if not minor havoc, in the Lanthorn security office, members of the staff repeatedly finding the electric kettle switched on when it had been switched off, and the refrigerator switched off when left on! Consequently, in order to thwart the spectral prankster, the kettle was always unplugged from the socket when not in use but, it being necessary to keep the refrigerator running all the time, the wall switch was taped over. But there was no frustrating the phantom fingers, for the switch was still occasionally being found in the 'off' position, the food thawing and the cold drinks tepid!

The Red-Haired Lady on the Queen's House Stairs

The Queen's House, a magnificent Tudor building in the south-west corner of Tower Green, rich in timbered panels and ceilings, steeped in tradition, was built in 1530 on the orders of Henry VIII. He intended to live there as an alternative to the White Tower but having disposed of Cardinal Wolsey (who was heading for the block and a beheading, but fortuitously died *en route*) the King commandeered Hampton Court and so the new house became the official residence of the Lieutenant of the Tower, it being known as the Lieutenant's Lodgings. In 1880 it was renamed the Queen's House, in which the Resident Governor and his family live.

It was there in bygone days that prisoners brought to the Tower were initially questioned, 'booked in' and assigned their various quarters in the fortress. Some, Guy Fawkes, Anne Askew and others were brought from their prison quarters to be interrogated there, but the really important prisoners were actually confined either there or in the Bell Tower which backs on to it, a tower which can only be entered via the Queen's House, all thereby being under the day-today supervision of the Lieutenant. Those who endured imprisonment in those two buildings read like a veritable list from history; Princess Elizabeth (later Elizabeth I), Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, Sir Thomas More, Archbishop Fisher and many others. Lady Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox was imprisoned there for five years on three different occasions, Lady Arabella Stuart endured over four years confinement only to die, her sanity gone. The doomed Lady Jane Grey was accomodated there for a short while and in more recent centuries the Quaker William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, and Rudolph Hess, Deputy Fuhrer of Nazi Germany also found themselves deprived of their freedom behind those timbered walls.

So it is hardly surprising that their suffering and deprivation has given rise to the many instances of supernatural occurrences reported over the last two centuries, accounts of ghostly footsteps (see my *Beefeaters of the Tower of London* pub. 1985), the unnatural coldness in some of the rooms, the inexplicable sounds heard, even ghostly sightings. And it could have been one of the latter which was experienced by a secretary one dark evening in April 1994. She was alone in the building and, needing some papers from an upper room, started to ascend the main stairway. As she did so, she looked up – to see a woman facing her, a motionless figure who, in her own words, existed only 'from the waist up, as if in a portrait'. Caught completely unawares, she later recalled the appearance of the figure, noting the white collar and the fact that 'she' had red hair. In such a situation it is noteworthy that all sense of time usually deserts the witness, and

this level-headed young lady was no exception, describing afterwards how time seemed to stand still, until the apparition suddenly vanished. Unbelieving, she automatically continued to mount the stairs, and quite some time elapsed before she was able to recover from the shock.

Who could the ghostly figure have been? The most likely name to spring to mind is of course Princess Elizabeth who, like most of the Tudors, had red hair, and the 'white collar' could have been the ruff, which she made fashionable and therefore mandatory in Court circles. Admittedly she was not executed, but at the time of her imprisonment, under suspicion of being involved in some of treasonable plots prevailing at that time, her mind must have been in an agonised state of constant turmoil lest her half-sister Queen Mary should suddenly decide that such threats to her throne could be eliminated only by condemning her to follow in the footsteps of her mother Anne Boleyn, up the scaffold steps on Tower Green.

The Threshold of the Tower of London

Lift thine head,
If thou hast yet the gut and will,
Ere Black Cap lifts it for you,
Leaving thy corpse to rest as still
As all the crowd around.
Lift thine head and look aloft for strength,
Before thy blood alone doth smudge the axe's length.

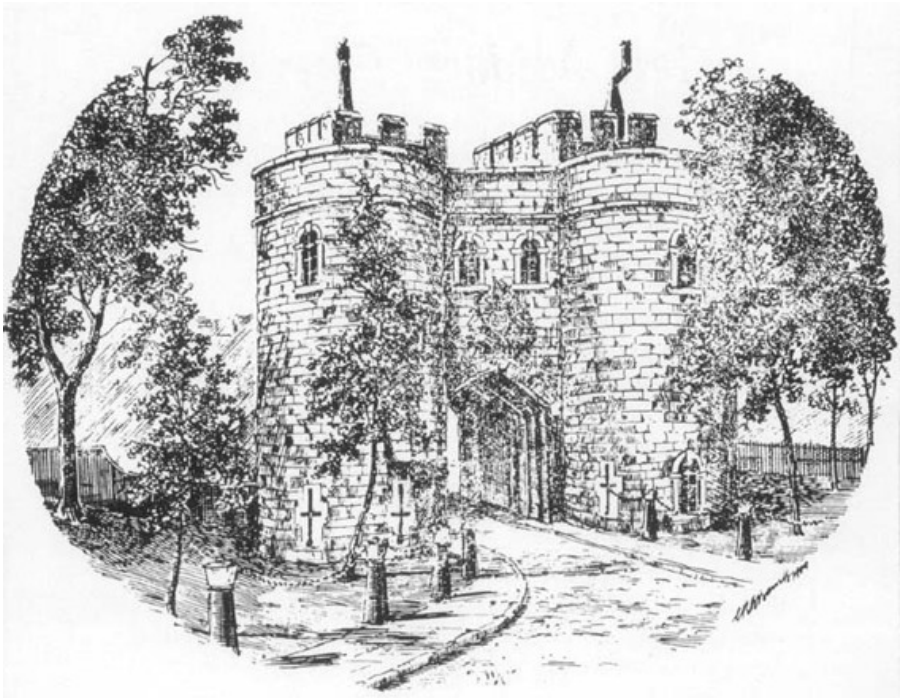
Immediately outside the Tower of London stands Tower Hill. From that eminence many men – women too – looked their last on the Tower, on London, on life itself. For it was on Tower Hill that scores of victims met death, death that came by the flashing axe, the burning logs, the taut rope. Down through the centuries the names reproach history for the manner in which death was meted out: John Goose, a Lollard, burnt in 1475; four church robbers hanged in 1480, as was Lady Pargitor's manservant for coin clipping in 1538; John Smith, Groom of King Edward's Stirrup, beheaded for treason in 1483, together with William Collingbourne, Sheriff of Wiltshire, hanged, drawn and quartered for composing a verse derogatory to Richard III. Death distinguished not between the highest and the lowest; from Don Pantaleon Sa, brother to the Portuguese Ambassador, beheaded for murder 1654, down to Mary Roberts, Charlotte Gardner and a one-armed soldier, William MacDonald, hanged for rioting in 1780. Many eminent names grace the lists, lords, dukes, archbishops, most of them having been led from their prison cells in the Tower of London by the yeoman warders who handed them over (against a receipt!) to the Sheriff of London and his men at the Tower Gates. Following beheading, the head was spiked on London Bridge as an awful example to all, the body being returned to the Tower for burial within or near the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula.

It is hardly surprising then that such suffering should manifest itself to those whose duties require them to be near the main gates. There the victims first faced the waiting crowds, the surging multitude of avid spectators; there the grim procession started, to end on the scaffold on the Hill.

And so it was that one night in World War II a sentry patrolling the Tower entrance was suddenly shocked into bloodchilling awareness of figures trooping down the Hill towards him. Clad in quaint uniforms, they slowly advanced. In their midst they bore a rough stretcher. And on the stretcher sprawled a headless body – whilst between arm and torso lay the severed head! Nearer and nearer the grim cortege approached–to fade into nothingness when barely yards away.

The sentry's detailed report was investigated by the authorities with great thoroughness. It was discovered that the uniforms worn by the ghostly figures tallied with those issued to the Sheriff's Men in the Middle Ages, men whose job it was to bring the corpse back for burial;

the head being conveyed to London Bridge by river from Tower Steps, the quickest and most customary route. All the reported facts agreed with historical detail – so who are we to doubt it?



The Middle Tower

The Middle Tower

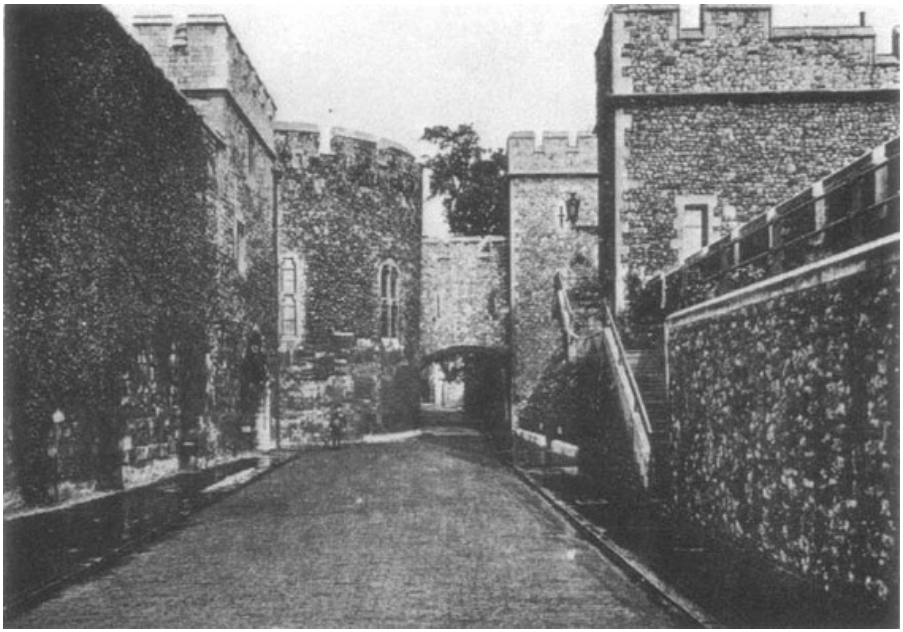
Here the mind's ear is sore press't
To catch but one sweet blessèd breath
Drawn from out an happy heart.
This tower they call the Middle….
What hath become of both the end and start,
And which fine joker hath brought forth
This gloomy riddle?

This, the first tower encountered on entering the castle, dates from 1280, though it was restored in 1717. It was too near the outer walls to be much used as a prison, but the name of one eminent prisoner appears in the ancient records, that of Laurence Shirley, Earl Ferrers. In 1760 he murdered his bailiff Johnson, shooting him with a pistol, for which foul deed he was taken to Tyburn to be hanged. Always elegant, the earl wore silver-embroidered clothes and made his final journey in his own carriage drawn by six horses. His entitlement, as an earl, to be hanged by a silken cord, was denied. He swung from a common hempen rope.

So was it his eccentric spirit which, a few years ago (1977), terrified two painters working within the Middle Tower? In broad daylight they heard the echoing sound of footsteps pacing the battlemented roof above. At first each thought the other was responsible and so was not alarmed. And then, when both were later working together in the same room … the measured pacing suddenly commenced. With dawning horror their eyes followed the path of the sounds beyond the ceiling – to pause – then to retrace its route.

Assistance was called for, and a thorough search revealed no *physical* presence nor any hiding-place. No battlements connect this tower with any other. Yet again and again during the next few days the footsteps were heard.

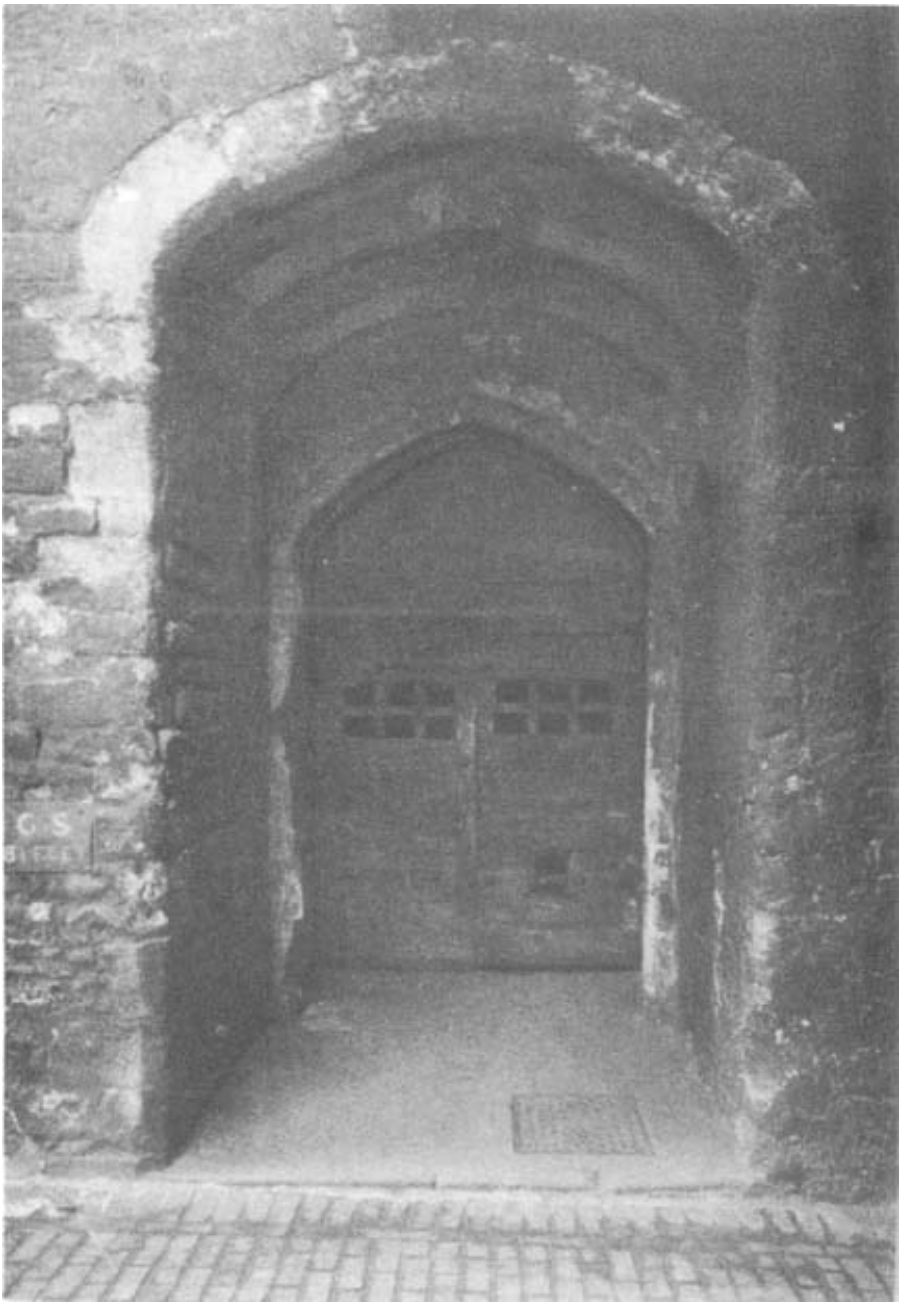
Was it the murderous earl – or some other, unrecorded felon, whose restless soul finds no peace?



Water Lane – Bloody Tower and Wakefield Tower on the left

The Outer Ward

What sweet subtletie thou art,
That takes my heart
And renders it ensnared and palpitating!
Thou art surely of the Gods' creating,
And naught of this unhappy Tower,
The combining of a shining Parenthood art thou,
A very Child of Eos with thy milken brow,
A cradle's wealth grown unto woman now,
The breath of life for which my soul lay waiting.
O dally by the Well Tower yet,
And cull a knot of Bergamot
Within thy garden,
Till my frail grasp betrays me to this Oubliette,
And I am thus by thee and all the World forgot,
Who none would pardon.



Sally port, Byward archway

The area between the inner and outer walls of the Tower of London is known as the Outer Ward. The southernmost stretch, from the Byward Tower to the Salt Tower, is Water Lane, the river Thames once flowing there before the construction of the outer wall in the thirteenth century. The other three sides of the Outer Ward are called the Casemates. These 'vaulted rooms within a fortified place' are stores, workshops and the residences of yeoman warders, their families and other staff. Over the centuries prisoners traversed the Outer Ward on their way to a prison tower or while being escorted to their deaths. It is hardly surprising then that this area has its fair share of occurrences that defy rational explanation.

One night in 1968 a Scots Guards sentry, whose patrol took him from the Byward Tower and Sally Port (a gloomy portal, once the Royal Entrance over the moat) and along to Traitors' Gate, was found in a distressed condition. 'They're following me up and down on my beat,' he gasped fearfully. 'They came out of the Sally Port!' Nothing untoward was discovered–but the sentry had to be relieved of his duty.

Within a year or so yet another visitation occurred, farther along Water Lane. In the middle of the night the sentry on duty there rushed into the guardroom. Distraught, the hair on his neck literally bristling, he could only gasp: 'Man in cloak – man in cloak!' He was given medical aid to combat his obviously shocked condition and, when more coherent, he described what he'd seen. A cloaked figure had suddenly emerged from the shadows. The sentry had been about to challenge, but the words had frozen on his lips as he saw that the figure was headless!

King Henry VI

On Water Lane stands the Wakefield Tower, one of the most ancient towers within the fortress. Built in the thirteenth century, it has served many uses: entrance to the long demolished Royal Apartments; storehouse of the state treaties and papers; depository of the Crown Jewels and State Regalia. The most gruesome function however was that of a prison, its dungeon being capable of confining scores of doomed wretches within its cold barbaric walls.

The Wakefield's most distinguished prisoner was without doubt King Henry VI. This gentle, learned monarch, fated by birth to wear the Crown, was ill-equipped to be the firm, decisive leader demanded by a country torn by civil strife. As the fortunes swung in the War of

the Roses, so Henry VI first ruled from Westminster, then suffered captivity in the Tower. There finally, 'on a Tuesday night 21 May 1471 betwixt xi and xii of the clock, the Duke of Gloster being then at the Tower and many others', the sad king met his end. Whilst praying in the little oratory in the upper chamber of the Wakefield Tower he was 'stikked with a dagger, full of deadly holes' – a dagger, many people believe, wielded by Richard of Gloucester, though no proof exists of this.

And it is said that the king's pale figure has been seen wandering fitfully outside the chamber in which he was so brutally slain – and that the figure appears between eleven o'clock and midnight!

Between the Wakefield Tower and the next, the Lanthorn Tower, runs a high battlemented wall, part of the inner curtain wall. There, centuries ago, stood the Great Hall, abode of Royalty, providing more comfort than did the White Tower. There kings and queens presided over sumptuous banquets, while maids-in-waiting flirted and jesters pranced and joked.

So who – or what – threw stones at a patrolling sentry on a dark still night in October 1978? From the battlements they rattled about his feet. Thrown singly, they hit his boots, one striking his leg – yet there was no wind to dislodge flaking fragments from the coping stone – nor did they fall vertically, but landed five yards or more from the wall's base. When another sentry took over, he too was subjected to similar bombardment. A search revealed nothing – except the realization that there was no access to the top of the. sheer wall other than a small door high in the Wakefield Tower, a door not only locked but having a further iron-barred gate secured across it.

No trace of the unseen assailant could be found – but shaken R.A.F. Regiment sentries, and a handful of small stones, bear witness to the playfulness of what long-dead joker?

Facing the Wakefield Tower is Traitors' Gate, the entrance through which the prisoners were brought by boat from their trial at Westminster. Proud princesses, doomed queens, condemned ministers, lords and prelates passed beneath the grim archway, its portcullis raised in readiness, prisoners en route to harsh imprisonment or worse.

Above the archway is St Thomas' Tower, named not as is often thought after St Thomas More but St Thomas a'Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, for he it is whose ghost is reputed to have appeared when arch and tower were being built.

In 1240 King Henry III, having filched adjoining land in order to increase the defences of his castle, gave orders for a Watergate to be built, with a low tower above it. Tradition has it that on Saint George's Day 1240, when the edifice was all but complete, a storm

arose and arch and tower collapsed. Work was restarted and proceeded well – until Saint George's Day 1241, when again the building gave way.

The explanation was given by a priest who claimed that he had witnessed the ghost of St Thomas a'Becket striking the stonework with his cross, whilst exclaiming that the defences were not for the benefit of the kingdom but 'for the injury and prejudice of the Londoners, my brethren'. Upon which dire condemnation the arch and tower were reduced to rubble.

Henry III, mindful that it was his grandfather who had caused the death of that 'turbulent priest' Becket, prudently insured himself against ghostly recriminations by including in the new building a small oratory, and naming the building after the indignant martyr, St Thomas.

Earlier this century the then Keeper of the Jewel House, Maj.-Gen. Sir George Younghusband, KCMG, KCIE, CB, resided in St Thomas' Tower. He related having been in a room there, the door of which slowly opened – remained so for a few seconds – then just as gently, closed again. This happened more than once, but nothing more was seen. There have been reports of a monk, wearing a brown habit, moving through the shadows, whilst a more recent occupant and his family recounted instances of having heard in 1974 a soft 'slap slap', as if of monks' sandals moving across a wooden floor – disconcerting to say the least, since the residence had wall to wall carpeting!

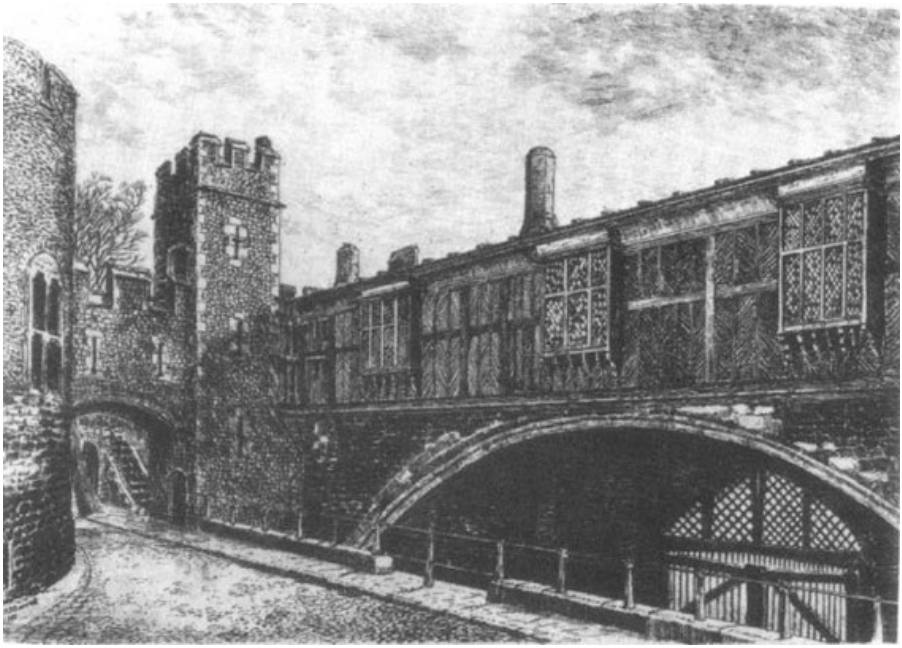
Wakefield/Lanthorn battlements, Outer Ward

Mint Street, that section of the Outer Ward running north from the Byward Tower, is not exempt from eerie happenings. I myself as a yeoman warder going on duty before dawn one morning heard a

sentry approaching along Mint Street. ‘Has anyone passed you?’ the sentry, a Scots Guardsman, asked. I paused, then queried the sentry’s departure from the usual beat. ‘I heard an unearthly shriek,’ he explained. ‘It came from along there.’ He pointed in the direction from which I had come ‘And after the yell I heard the sound of running footsteps!’

He spoke calmly and was obviously not a man given to flights of fancy – yet I had walked alone along the dark, silent street for over two hundred yards, having heard and seen nothing.

Not all the instances have occurred in the open air. Footsteps have been heard ascending the stairs within one of the houses set in the thickness of the outer wall, footsteps sounding when no one but the listening resident was in the house. Later, in an upper room, my wife felt the overwhelming presence of ‘someone else’, a sensation accompanied by a feeling of chilling evil. At last, determined not to panic, she could nevertheless withstand it no longer, and had to retreat hurriedly to find the comfort of neighbours and the everyday bustle of the world.



Traitors’ Gate and St Thomas’s Tower

Other residents have heard the crying of a baby coming from an upper room. Thinking it was their child they investigated. Theirs lay sleeping peacefully in its cot. But the eerie crying continued – from where? from what?

Within the same house a yeoman warder, whilst standing in the hall one evening, suddenly became aware of a man a few feet away, by the

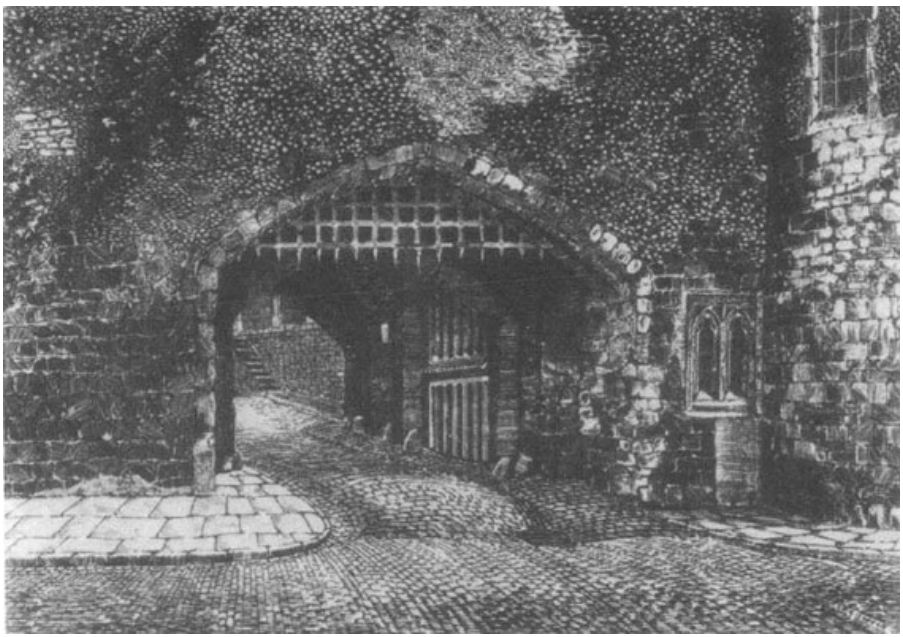
front door. No mediaeval figure this; no ruff, no doublet, no foppish Court dress even – yet old fashioned in a way, for he wore a grey suit cut in the utility style of the 1940s. As the yeoman warder turned in surprise, the figure vanished. This happened in 1977.

No records exist of any tragedy in that house – except that only yards away stood until recently the ill-fated rifle range where enemy spies were executed by firing squad during the two World Wars. Behind the high walls of the Tower of London they faced death bravely. Who knows when their spirits found peace?

Mint Street, Outer Ward

The Bloody Tower

Stay ye near the tower, the Bloody Tower, at ten,
And ye shall hear a cry,
A great Amen,
That lifts the very Raven's savage head,
And wakes the sleeping servant in his bed.
'God preserve King Henry!' is the shout,
And by warder 'gainst strong guard the keys are carried,
As if iron into palm the twain are married….
And the while the candlelamp it goes not out.
So praise ye all that God preserves King Hal,
Foolhardy is the one whose voice is weak,
But if ye have aught else on which to speak….
Wait till the candlelamp it goeth out!

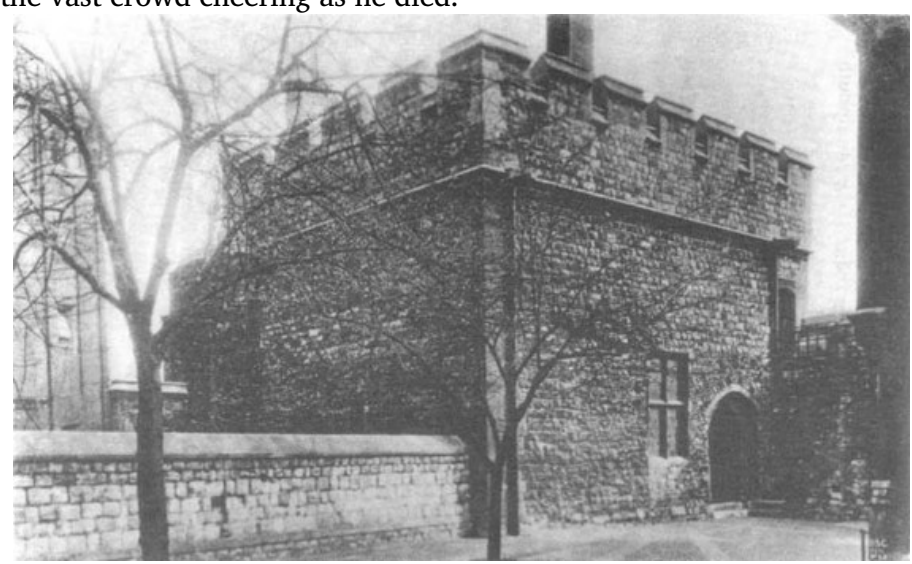


Bloody Tower Arch

The Inner Ward is the area surrounding the White Tower, and is bordered by the inner wall. For many centuries, when Royalty resided in the White Tower and the Royal Apartments, the inner ward was for the exclusive use of Royalty and the nobles of the court. Also within the protection of the inner wall were stored the nation's armoury, the State Papers, and the Regalia and Jewels. During these centuries there was only one entrance to the inner ward, a heavily guarded archway beneath a gatehouse known originally as the Garden Tower (it overlooked the gardens of the Lieutenant's Lodgings) but later as the Bloody Tower. Situated only yards from Traitors' Gate, it served admirably as a prison for princes and knights, bishops and judges.

Here, in Queen Mary's reign, languished Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Latimer of Winchester and Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London. Opposing the Pope's supremacy, they were condemned as heretics and later burnt to death at Oxford.

Here, in the same reign, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, was confined for attempting to make his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England. He perished beneath the axe on Tower Hill, the vast crowd cheering as he died.



The Bloody Tower

Judge Jeffries, the Hanging Judge of the Monmouth Rebellion in

1685, eventually caught by the mob, was placed in the Bloody Tower for his own protection – where he drank himself to death with copious draughts of brandy.

The Bloody Tower also heard the whispering of evil conspirators, when Sir Thomas Overbury survived fearful poisoning for over four months. He had sought to persuade his friend Robert Carr not to marry the vicious Countess of Essex, but he under-estimated her influence and malice. Finally her poisonous concoctions took effect, and in the Bloody Tower he died a horrifying death.

But if the stones could speak, surely they would lament the deaths of the two little princes in 1483. Confined, it is said, in the upper chamber of the Bloody Tower, the two small boys, twelve-year-old King Edward V and his nine-year-old brother Richard Duke of York, were taken from their mother's care into the custody of their uncle, Richard Duke of Gloucester. Placed in the Bloody Tower, they were never seen again. The country could not continue without a ruler, and so the Duke of Gloucester became King Richard III.

Tradition states that one boy was smothered, the other stabbed to death. Skeletons discovered in 1674 beneath an external stairway of the White Tower were assumed to be theirs.

And so their two small ghosts, hand in hand, clad in white nightgowns, have been seen around the Bloody Tower, a sight for pity and compassion rather than terror.

Sir Walter Raleigh

Be they innocent children or worldly adults, the Bloody Tower spared none, and surely no one proved more brave than Sir Walter Raleigh. An adventurer, a scientist, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth, he could do little wrong. But the next monarch, James I, had no time for men of Raleigh's sophisticated calibre. Accused of treasonable plotting, Raleigh was soon the occupant of the Bloody Tower, a confinement which lasted thirteen years. He would stroll on Raleigh's Walk, the battlemented wall adjoining his prison; dressed always in the height of fashion, he was popular with the people, with rich merchants, ambassadors and learned men. But as the years dragged

by, the cold of the stones and the dampness of the river mists sapped his vitality, and rheumatism racked his ageing joints. King James, anxious to conclude a peace pact with Philip of Spain, acceded to Philip's vengeful demand for Raleigh's death, Raleigh who had plundered so much gold from Spanish galleons and colonies.

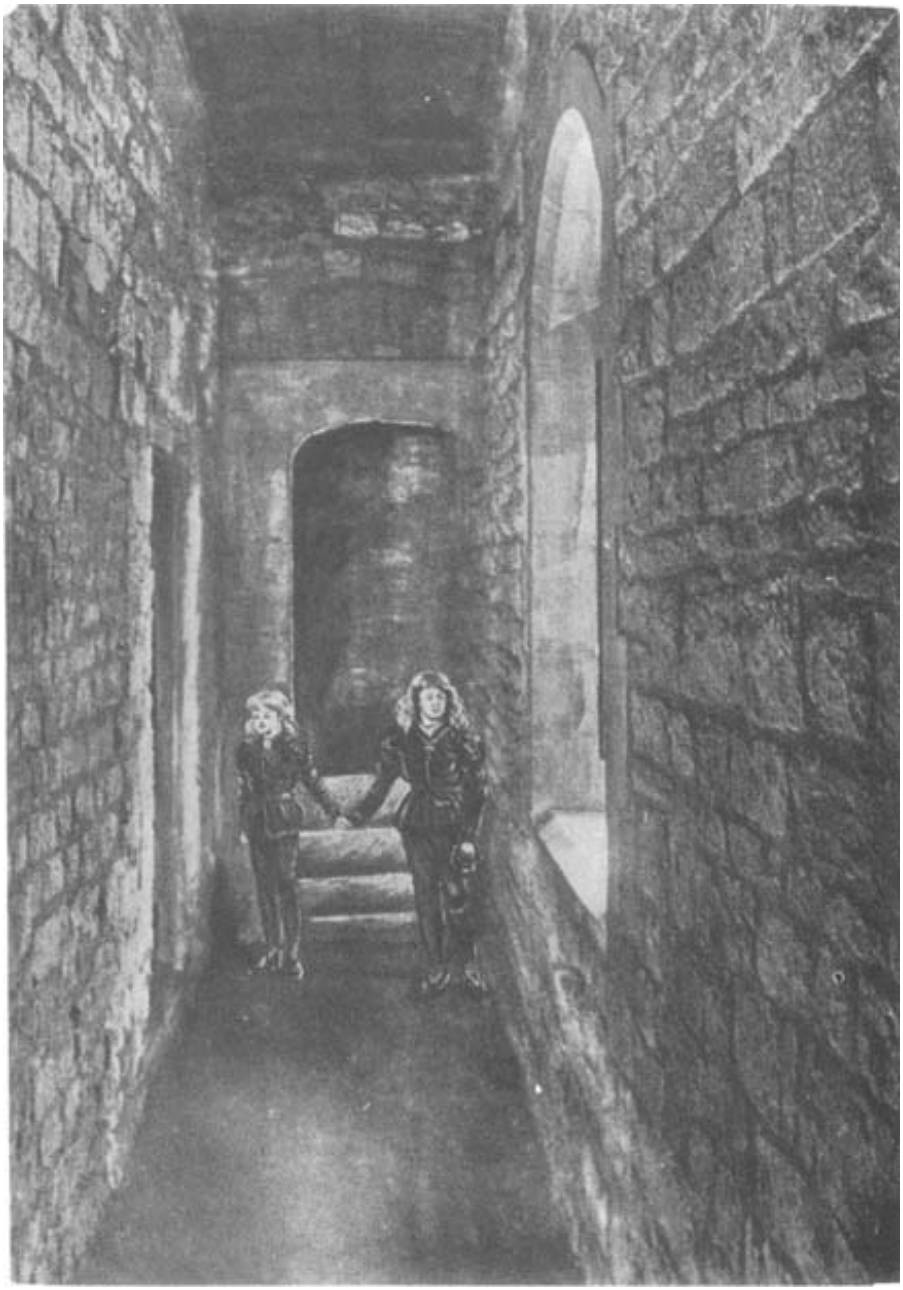
Eventually, on 24th October 1618, after years of deprivation, Raleigh was awakened by a yeoman warder and told his fate. Peter, his valet, attempted to help him to prepare, to comb his hair. Raleigh, undaunted to the end, retorted: 'Let them comb it that shall have it!' Taken to Old Palace Yard at Westminster, he met death bravely as the axe descended.

His phantom, then, surely has greater claim than any other to return to the scene of his long imprisonment. Over the years it has been reportedly seen flitting noiselessly through the forbidding rooms of the Bloody Tower; seen too on moonlit nights by those whose duties take them past Raleigh's Walk, his ghostly figure floating along the battlements.

In Raleigh's time the Walk extended to the Lieutenant's Lodgings. Now part of those battlements are incorporated in houses built a century or so later, houses occupied by yeoman warders and their families. And since 1976 one wife in particular will always have cause to remember that her bathroom is positioned where Raleigh promenaded. Deciding to have a bath, she leant over to turn on the taps. Next minute a hand brushed gently over the small of her back! Instinctively she straightened up, turning to chide her husband – then caught her breath as she remembered that he was Watchman for the night and had left the house hours ago! However, yeoman warders' wives are not given to swoons or the vapours; 'Oh, stop it, Raleigh!' she exclaimed and, undaunted, continued with her ablutions!

Incidents such as this are not restricted to nighttime, nor do they occur only to officials or residents of the fortress. In August 1970 a young visitor to the Bloody Tower saw a long-haired woman wearing an ankle-length black velvet dress, standing by an open window. She wore a white cap, and around her neck hung a large, gold medallion. As the visitor stared, the figure faded away.

Intrigued, the visitor returned some weeks later – only to see the apparition again, in the same place! No longer shocked by the unexpected, she was able to describe in detail the apparel of the ghost.



‘Princes in the Bloody Tower’ (an artist’s impression from an Edwardian postcard)

The mediaeval records are understandably incomplete, but for all we know, one of the many women who suffered imprisonment may well have been locked up behind the Bloody Tower’s ancient, creaking doors.

Two R. A.F. Regiment sentries on guard in October 1978 will not

easily forget their tour of duty. On a still, moonless night, just after midnight, with never an autumn leaf stirring, they patrolled beneath the Bloody Tower arch. For no apparent reason they paused, feeling eerie apprehension, the hairs at the back of their necks bristling – and then their short capes billowed upward, almost covering their faces, as an icy breeze suddenly blew through the archway – a rush of cold air which died away as rapidly and as inexplicably as it had arrived.

Later that night their sergeant traversed the grim forbidding archway en route to the Waterloo Block. To his right the floodlights illuminated the ancient thirteenth-century wall built to stand high and impenetrable, guarding the approaches to the White Tower. Now it was crumbling, pierced by gaping holes once arrow slits and loops.

The sergeant paused, his attention attracted by a shadow he could see through a hole in the nearest end of the wall adjoining the Wakefield Tower. He stared–then his eyes widened with disbelief as the shadow moved … vanished … only to reappear at the next hole! Hardly pausing, the shape slipped past each gaping aperture, gliding silently along behind the crumbling wall. Yet when the sergeant reached the far end, nothing was to be seen on the wide expanse of grass stretching behind the White Tower!

Tower Green

If 'tis seen, men say 'tis not.
If 'tis heard, men say the lot
Of all fools is a simple-mindedness
Beyond belief.
So why hold faith in aught
But candle-flame that burneth,
Roasting-spit that turneth,
Lover's heart that yearneth?
These are plausible, men saith….
So keep unto thyself thy tale
Of yester e'en's ethereal wraith!

Tower Green

A central garden, sheltered by plane trees, is known as Tower Green. It is bounded on the east by the White Tower and the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula forms its northernmost side. To the west squats the Beauchamp Tower, while its southern border is the Queen's House, originally the Lieutenant's Lodgings – since 1530 the residence of the officer in charge of the Tower of London.

In such a pleasant oasis it is easy to imagine the royal levees, the parties and merrymaking which must have taken place here during the centuries when the Tower of London was a Royal Residence. Yet one small enclosure on Tower Green constantly reminds us that this is where the private scaffold stood, the five-foot high wooden platform, draped in black, strewn with straw. There, witnessed by the Royal Court and dignitaries of the City of London, perished those whose only crime was to incur a king's wounded pride or be thought a dangerous rival.

Before 1536 executions, even of women, were not infrequent; infidelity too, was hardly a rarity. Yet the punishment of death for alleged unfaithfulness – and that in the person of a Queen of England – was unimaginable. That such an event *did* happen has never ceased to horrify and appal subsequent generations.

Queen Anne Boleyn

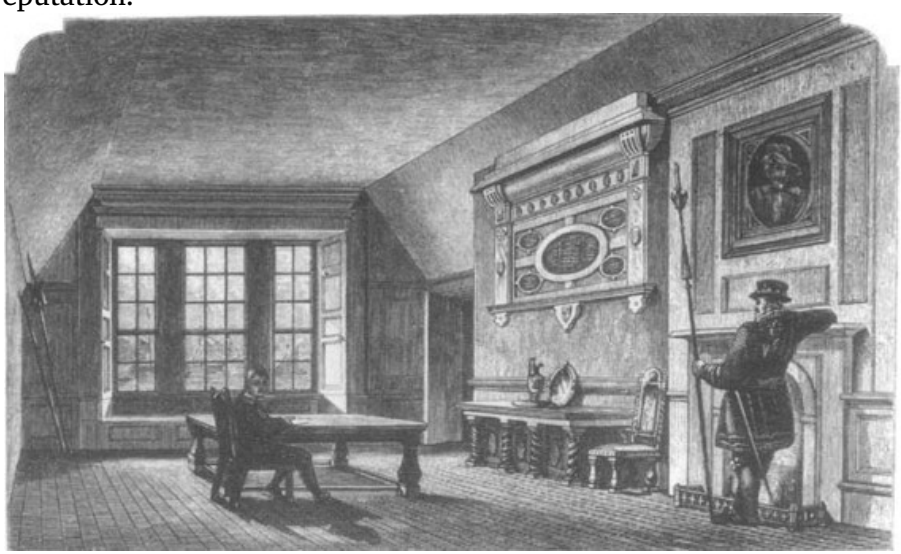
Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII, had been queen two brief years when she was accused of infidelity and treason and sentenced to be 'either burnt or beheaded on the green within the Tower as his Majesty in his pleasure should think fit'. Confined in the Lieutenant's Lodgings for four days, she was led out to the private execution site. Strangely enough she was to be beheaded by the sword – a rare weapon of execution in English history, but infinitely preferable to the axe. The latter was a cumbersome and ill-balanced weapon, its primitive design often necessitating more than one stroke.

Anne mounted the steps and knelt upright, there being no block when the sword was employed. The French headsman, black clad, stepped forward. Her attention being distracted by his assistant, Anne

mercifully failed to see the flashing blade as, with one stroke, her head was severed. In accordance with custom, the executioner held her head high – and the gathered assembly gasped in horror as the eyes and lips continued to move! Her pitiful remains were ensconced in an old arrow chest and buried beneath the altar in the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula on Tower Green.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that through the centuries apparitions purporting to be those of the doomed queen have been seen, even by those most prosaic and level-headed human beings, soldiers of the British Army.

In 1864 a sentry of the King's Royal Rifle Corps on duty at the Queen's House saw, through the swirling river mist, a white figure. He challenged and, receiving no reply, attacked – only to drive his bayonet through the spectre! Being found in a state of collapse, he was court-martialled but two witnesses at the window of the Bloody Tower corroborated his story and he was acquitted. The phantom figure was seen by other sentries in later years, gaining the sentry post an evil reputation.



Council Chamber in the Queen's House

Still in the last century, a yeoman warder swore under oath to seeing a bluish form hovering, a shape which then seemed to move towards the Queen's House, whilst in 1933 a guardsman reported seeing a headless woman floating towards him near the Bloody Tower.

Within the Queen's House, long a prison for royal and important personalities as well as being the Lieutenant's residence, many an eerie experience has been reported. Across the ancient timbered floors walks the 'Grey Lady'. Only a woman will ever discover her secret – for she has never been seen by a man. In the 1970s the figure of a

man in mediaeval dress was seen drifting along an upper corridor, whilst in the same decade firm footsteps were frequently heard ascending a rear stairway. So convincing were these sounds that eventually two residents investigated. On hearing the measured tread, one resident went instantly to the foot of the stairs, his companion going to the top. Slowly they moved along the stairs – to meet no one but the other!

Late in 1978 an American guest in the house heard religious chanting. It was midnight, and the faint music and voices continued for some minutes. Assuming it to be from a radio or similar equipment, she mentioned it casually the next day – only to be told that no music had been played as late as that. The same slow religious chant had been heard on a previous occasion by a resident passing by the house.

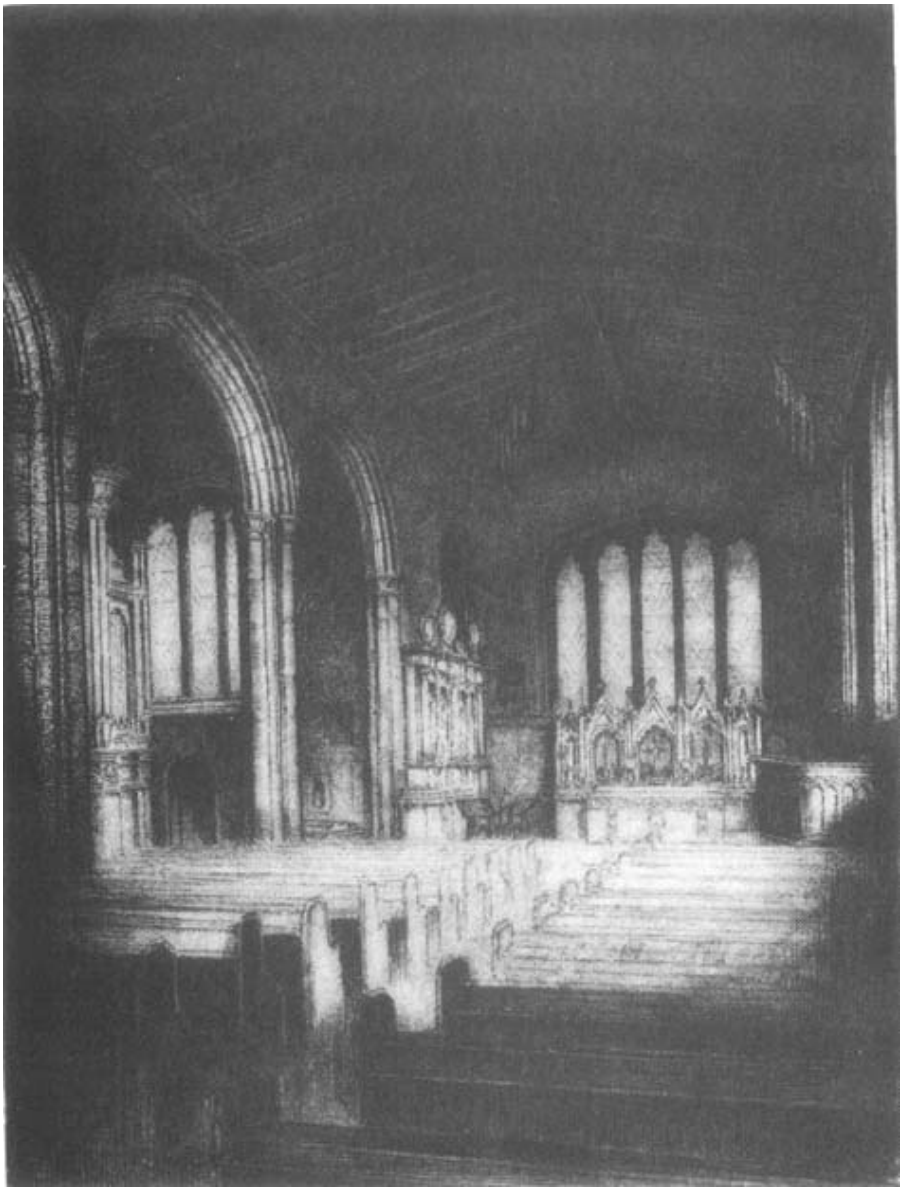
The Gunpowder Plot conspirators

A room adjoining that in which Anne Boleyn passed her last few days has a particularly unearthly atmosphere, being noticeably colder than other rooms in the house. A peculiar perfumed smell lingers in the air, and such is the brooding menace of the room that no unaccompanied girl or young child is ever permitted to sleep in it, for in the past those who were have woken to feel that they were being

slowly suffocated!

Across Tower Green is the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula, and an instance some years ago of lights burning therein led the Officer of the Guard to investigate. Peering in through the window, he stared unbelieving at the spectacle confronting him. Along the aisle, between the tombs, moved a procession of spectral figures, knights and their ladies. They were led by a female who, he averred, resembled Anne Boleyn, and they moved towards the altar beneath which her pitiful remains had been buried centuries before. Even as he stared the vision faded and the chapel darkened, leaving the officer alone in the deepening shadows of Tower Green.

Of the women who perished so violently on the private scaffold, surely none suffered more terribly – nor more undeservedly – than Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury. Over seventy years of age, innocent of all crime, the countess was slain as an act of vengeance by King Henry VIII. The countess' son, Cardinal Pole, from the safe haven of France, reviled Henry's religious beliefs. Retribution – and the axe – descended on his mother. On the scaffold the countess proclaimed her innocence. She refused to kneel over the block and she challenged the axeman to 'remove her head as best he could'. Pursuing her around the block, the axeman is said to have literally hacked her to death in a welter of blood.



Chapel Royal, St Peter ad Vincula

Over the centuries it seems as if her proud Plantagenet spirit still shrieks defiance to the sombre skies. On the anniversaries of her brutal execution, her ghost is reported to run round the scaffold site pursued by the spectral axeman, the bloodstained axe brandished aloft.

One night in 1975 personnel in the Waterloo Block overlooking the Green were roused in the early hours by the sound of piercing screams. This was confirmed by men on duty in the Byward Tower, and a few nights later the guardsman patrolling the rear of the

Waterloo Block also reported that just before dawn he too heard high-pitched screaming from the direction of the Green. Nothing was found.

Could it really have been the death cries of the hideously mutilated countess?

Singular Execution of the Countess of Salisbury in 1539.

The Beauchamp Tower

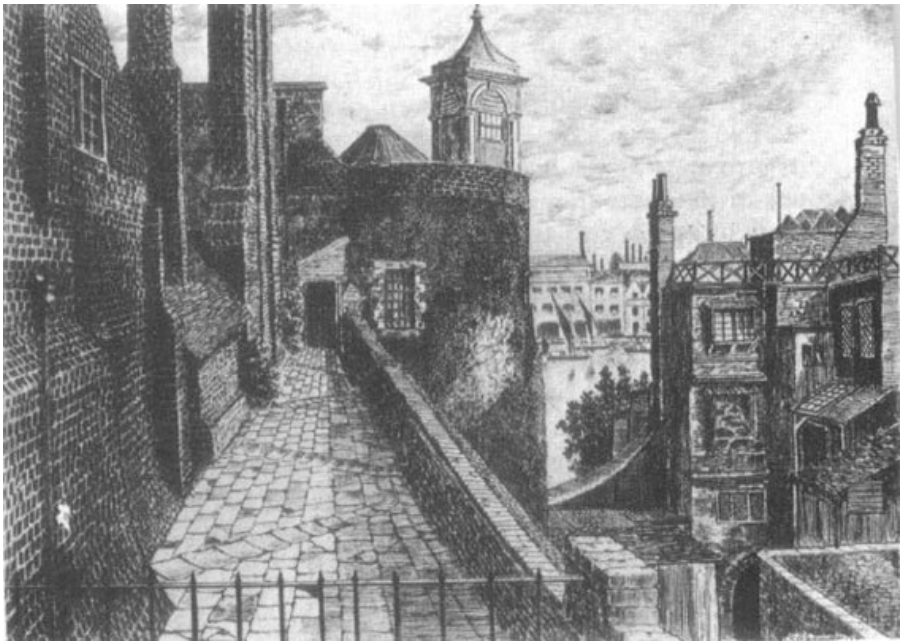
Heaven send us open weather,
For if I stay thus so shut up,
With no walk upon the battlements,
Then shall I lose my looks, my wits,
And aught else of value
That the good Lord gave me.
'Tis not much when I take air and exercise.
The guards and women there all crowd the way.
But I can stretch both foot and eye,
And see to where the river's sheen
Doth mock the sky.
So I do say….
Heaven send us open weather,
That God and I and London Town
May stand together.

The Beauchamp Tower

On the west side of Tower Green, overlooking the scaffold site, stands the Beauchamp Tower. Because of its proximity to the Lieutenant's Lodgings it became one of the more 'popular' prison towers, favouring those of noble birth and high estate. Not that much comfort was provided: a fire, some candles, rushes spread on the floor, these did little to compensate for the open arrow slits and cold, thick walls.

Originally the prison room and the living quarters of its guardian, the yeoman warder, on the top floor, could only be reached via the battlements from the Bell Tower, the latter being integral with the Lieutenant's Lodgings (now the Queen's House). The present doorway was a later addition; in earlier times such an aperture would have weakened the defences, and in any case it would not have been seemly for prisoners to have been conducted through the Inner Ward, the precincts of the nobles and the Royal Family. The lower chambers, then, were dungeons, cramped and gloomy cells secured by heavy doors, approached by spiral stairs from above.

Over the centuries the State Prison Room, on the first floor, housed many prisoners. In them the flame of hope burned bright, the hope that a change of monarch, a change of policy, could bring about their release. For a great number of them, however, it was not to be; after years of captivity they were led out, to face the baying mob, the black-clad axeman. Some did survive, to have titles and estates bestowed on them anew. A grim gamble, with Fate tossing the dice!



Elizabeth's Walk

During their imprisonment time hung heavy. Many of these were men of breeding and of letters, skilled in Latin, versed in the Scriptures. And there, locked away in the great fortress, having ceased to exist so far as the outside world was concerned, they carved inscriptions on the walls. Proud family crests, pitiful pleas of innocence, religious quotations, even wry witticisms adorn the stonework, mute messages from those who lived from day to day under the shadow of violent execution.

The instrument they used for inscribing was in all probability the dagger. Forks were not invented until the seventeenth century; before that men carried daggers with which to cut their food and convey it to their mouths. It was of little use in an escape bid. The century of the hostage is the twentieth century; when almost any sacrifice is made to save a human life. But in the Middle Ages life was cheap and a prisoner who, holding his warder hostage and demanding freedom, would have been told to go ahead – the Lieutenant had many more warders with which to replace the one stabbed! And should the prisoner employ his dagger to commit suicide, it would simply save the axeman a job.

Among those who left their marks in the stone is Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel. A devout Catholic, he was imprisoned in 1585 accused of aiding the Jesuits and, later, of praying for the success of the Spanish Armada in its attempted invasion of these islands. Queen Elizabeth spared his life, even offering him his freedom if he would

forsake his religion. He refused. For ten years he was held prisoner, then died, in his fortieth year, in the Beauchamp Tower.

One of the more famous occupants of the State Prison Room was Lord Guildford Dudley, son of the Duke of Northumberland. The duke, adviser to the ailing King Edward VI, arranged for Guildford to marry the king's cousin Lady Jane Grey, and then recommended to the King that she was the person most suited to succeed to the throne. She was eligible by birth, and the Duke was a very ambitious man. To have his son and daughter-in-law King and Queen of England would have given him immeasurable power and wealth.

The young king agreed to this, then conveniently died. Whereupon Northumberland brought Guildford and his wife to the White Tower and proclaimed Lady Jane Grey Queen of England. But he was completely unaware that the majority of the country wanted, not Jane, but the dead king's sister, Mary Tudor. So overwhelming the support for Mary, so troublesome the uprisings by those few who supported Jane, that the days of the uncrowned queen were numbered. She was beheaded on Tower Green; her father-in-law Northumberland begged for mercy and promised to renounce his faith, to embrace Catholicism. Mary Tudor permitted him to do so, the ceremony being enacted in St John's Chapel in the White Tower. Then she had him executed!

Young Guildford and his four brothers were all imprisoned in the Beauchamp Tower, where two carvings of the name 'Jane' have been found inscribed on the walls. Of the five brothers, one died therein, three were released, and Guildford perished beneath the axe on Tower Hill. His headless body, 'dragged in a carre' across the cobbles, was entombed in the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula on Tower Green.

As with other towers, so the Beauchamp has its share of supernatural happenings. The battlements connecting the Bell Tower with the Beauchamp had the name 'Prisoners' Walk' and later 'Elizabeth's Walk'. Here those prisoners who were not close confined (that is, fettered and chained within their cells), were allowed to exercise, and even catch a glimpse of the outside world.

Hardly surprising then, that a Tower guide should see a man wearing cavalier-type clothing moving along those battlements. This sighting occurred during the afternoon and, as Elizabeth's Walk cannot be seen from the Inner Ward because of the houses obscuring it, the figure could only have been seen from outside the Tower of London, from the area of the front gates.

The apparition could well have been that of James, Duke of Monmouth who in 1685 led the ill-fated Monmouth's Rebellion against the King's forces. Defeated, he was imprisoned in the Bell Tower and doubtless exercised on Elizabeth's Walk. After his trial he

was taken to Tower Hill and there, before a multitude of spectators, gave the axeman a few gold guineas to make a quick job of the execution.

James, Duke of Monmouth

'Pray do your business well,' he said. 'Do not serve me as you did my Lord Russell; I have heard that you struck him three or four times – if you strike me twice I cannot promise not to move.'

The inducement availed him little; the axeman took five blows to sever his head, much to the fury of the crowd. It is related that the head was subsequently sewn back on to the torso so that a portrait could be painted, the join being hidden by a scarf.

Inside the Beauchamp itself, eerie gasps have been heard from time

to time, and ornaments unaccountably change their position within the room. An old story recounts how the spectre of Lord Guildford Dudley was seen, shedding ghostly tears, drifting around the State Prison Room. Poor Dudley, so soon to be parted from his young queen-wife, to be reunited after death beneath the cold altar stones of St Peter's Chapel.

The White Tower

Planted as he was in manhood's strength,
Upon the Broadwalk where his eyes had length
Enough to compass majestie and might,
He made a study of the nation's vile disorder.
'Ever like this it has been,' he pondered,
'Ever the arrow's line has wandered,
'Till the bow is slack and still,
'And the shaft without a flight.
'But look you, London,
'Look you God's environ'd world,
'To where the Union Flag at sun-up is unfurl'd,
'There by the White Tower's glowering impound,'
'Is stood a Yeoman Warder strongly to his ground,
'And 'neath his breast in happy pride encurl'd,
'The throbbing heart of England still is found.'

Standing proudly in the Inner Ward, dominating Tower Green, the Broadwalk and indeed all the other towers, is the Norman Keep – the White Tower. Ninety-two feet high, its battlemented roof is capped by four turrets, a roof strong enough to support the weight of the many cannon which defended the Keep in the reign of Henry VIII.

Like most Norman keeps it originally had but a single entrance, situated one floor above ground level. Should all outer defences fall, the men-at-arms would then hack away the external wooden steps and, out of reach of battering rams could continue to hold out against attack. The White Tower was self-sufficient even in that vital commodity, water, a well in the basement providing ample supplies.

Not content with the protection of the moat, drawbridges and portcullis, two surrounding walls and a small resident army of troops, the Royal Family lived as far away as possible from any attack – on the uppermost floor of the White Tower. Adjoining their apartments was the Great Council Chamber, where the issues of the day were resolved, usually by the king. The White Tower was primarily a castle built for defence rather than a palace for luxury, and so the narrow passages could be defended by just two men, and the spiral stair was designed 'clockwise ascending' so that a right-handed defender had superiority wielding a sword against a right-hander attacking up the stairs. Comfort there was little, windows being small for protection but, unglazed, admitted the bitter winds blowing along the river. Tapestries on the walls, straw strewn floors, log fires crackling in the fireplaces; primitive conditions indeed, but at least the occupants were safe from attack. In those days that was all important.

The Banqueting Chamber and the quarters of the nobles of the Court occupied the next floor down, while the reception floor housed the men-at-arms and personal staff.

Nor was the spiritual side of life neglected; the White Tower possesses one of the most perfect examples of a Norman chapel, the Chapel Royal of St John the Evangelist. Here royalty worshipped; here the Order of the Bath took place in which potential knights prepared themselves before their accolade; here too, Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed Queen of England, the girl so young to be queen, so soon to die; and Mary Tudor plighted her troth to King Philip of Spain.

The lowest floor, half underground, housed the armoury and kitchens, the dungeons and the torture chamber. No doors or windows

there, in those days – behind the fifteen-feet thick walls, accessible only via the spiral stairs from above, the prisoners were incarcerated. There, in the darkness and squalor, men – and women – suffered the agonies of the rack, the fearsome constrictions of Skeffington's Daughter, its iron bands contorting the body beyond endurance. For while coronation processions rich in panoply and trappings did indeed start from the White Tower; while festive carousals filled the Banqueting Chamber, life in the fortress was only revelry and feasting for those in the sovereign's favour. Others, who had forfeited the royal trust, forfeited their freedom – and later, their heads.

From the very roof to the dungeons, the White Tower has witnessed violence and death. Kings and princes, lords and ladies, even common soldiers looked their last on the world there. During the Civil War a Royalist soldier was hotly chased up the spiral stairs by a Roundhead. Having lost his sword, desperately the Royalist dropped to his knee and, tripping his pursuer, seized him and hurled him through the window, the Roundhead crashing to his death on the Broadwalk below.

Centuries earlier, in 1215, the country had groaned beneath the harsh rule of King John. But, tradition has it, he had more to concern him than the suffering of the masses. Despite being married, he was determined to possess Maud FitzWalter, 'Fair Maud', daughter of Baron FitzWalter of Baynards Castle. She repulsed his every advance and so, not to be denied, he had her abducted and locked up in the round turret of the White Tower. Her father protested so vehemently that the king exiled him and his family to France and then, all obstacles removed, continued his assault of Fair Maud's virtue! Though caged and helpless, Maud defied him – whereupon he caused a poisoned egg to be sent to her in her food. She ate it – and died there in the bitter cold loneliness of the high turret.

Much later her father managed to return home, to find the country on the verge of revolution. Mustering the other barons to the cause, he led them against the King, ultimately forcing him to endorse the Magna Carta. And so it could be said that the document which gave the English their freedom originated from a poisoned egg in the round turret of the White Tower. Perhaps Maud's life was not sacrificed entirely in vain.

High on the battlements in 1234 Gruffydd Prince of Wales sought to escape by lowering himself from the roof by means of a rope. But the rope broke and Grufydd plunged to instant death, being found the next morning 'his head and neck crushed between his shoulder blades'. His son, Llewelyn, also a prisoner, later escaped and continued to fight the English. Captured in 1282, he was executed and his head was mounted on a spike and exhibited in London while bells

rang and crowds cheered. It was adorned with an ivy wreath, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy that a Welsh prince would one day be crowned in London! The head was then attached to a turret of the White Tower, near the spot from whence his father had previously fallen to such a hideous death. Truly a warning to all, that escape didn't always mean freedom.

Even the top floor, domicile of the Royal Family, was not spared its share of horror. In the adjoining Council Chamber one day in June 1485 Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later King Richard III) presided at a Council Meeting. Requiring to dispose of Lord Hastings, he accused him of treason and witchcraft. 'By St Paul!' he exclaimed, 'I will not dine till I have seen thy head off!'

The wretched Hastings was hustled down the spiral stair and out on the Tower Green. A log of timber served as the block; without trial or comfort of clergy his head was struck off – then shown to Richard ere he sat down to his midday meal.

Most violence, however, occurred in the dungeons. Here, underground, in the reign of Edward I, six hundred Jews, men and their families, were crowded together in appalling conditions. Public opinion strongly against them, they were accused of coin clipping, scraping metal from the rims of coins, a profitable crime. They were imprisoned for some months, and no fewer than two hundred and sixty-seven were eventually hanged.

Chivalry may have played a part on the mediaeval battlefield; it certainly had no place in the torture chamber of the White Tower. If a prisoner could be forced to divulge secrets which might incriminate a rival, it mattered not whether that prisoner was man or woman. In 1545 Anne Askew was accused of heresy by those who hoped that her confession would implicate Henry VIII's Queen Katherine Parr. Anne, a highly intelligent woman, was a zealous Protestant, a dangerous belief to hold in those bigoted days. She had been a friend of the queen, who held the same religious opinions – and so powerful enemies struck.

Arrested, imprisoned, questioned at length by Bonner, Bishop of London, she parried his accusations with shrewd responses. But it availed her little; she was sent to the White Tower and there, in the flickering lantern-light of the torture chamber she was racked unmercifully for over an hour. She confessed nothing. At last, her limbs stretched beyond endurance, almost senseless with agony, she was carried back to her cell. A short time later she was taken on a cart to Smithfield. There, before a vast crowd of callous, jeering onlookers, she was burned to death at the stake. But someone, somehow, felt pity for the poor tortured woman, for a bag of gunpowder inserted among the fiercely burning logs brought her merciful release from the searing

flames.

Gunpowder provided relief for Anne Askew; it spelt only doom to Guy Fawkes and his companions in 1605. Caught attempting to blow up the Houses of Parliament, Fawkes was yet another whose tongue – and joints - were loosened as the rack pulleys creaked and the ropes stretched remorselessly. After half an hour's excruciating torment he was a broken man, naming names, admitting everything. The other plotters were rounded up and the ringleaders were put to that most terrible of deaths, being hanged, drawn and quartered.

If the supernatural atmosphere of the White Tower was a stage, then we would certainly not want for a cast of players. Those already mentioned are but a few who would claim star parts, and even if their apparitions failed to materialize, surely the intensity of their sufferings could well echo down the centuries, just as their screams must have reverberated along the passages and stairways of their grim prison.

Instances have been reported by sentries patrolling at night, instances of hearing screams and stifled cries of pain through the heavy doors at the base of the White Tower. And not so many years ago, soldiers reported seeing the huge shadow of an axe spreading across Tower Green, to stand menacingly erect, silhouetted against the walls of the White Tower.

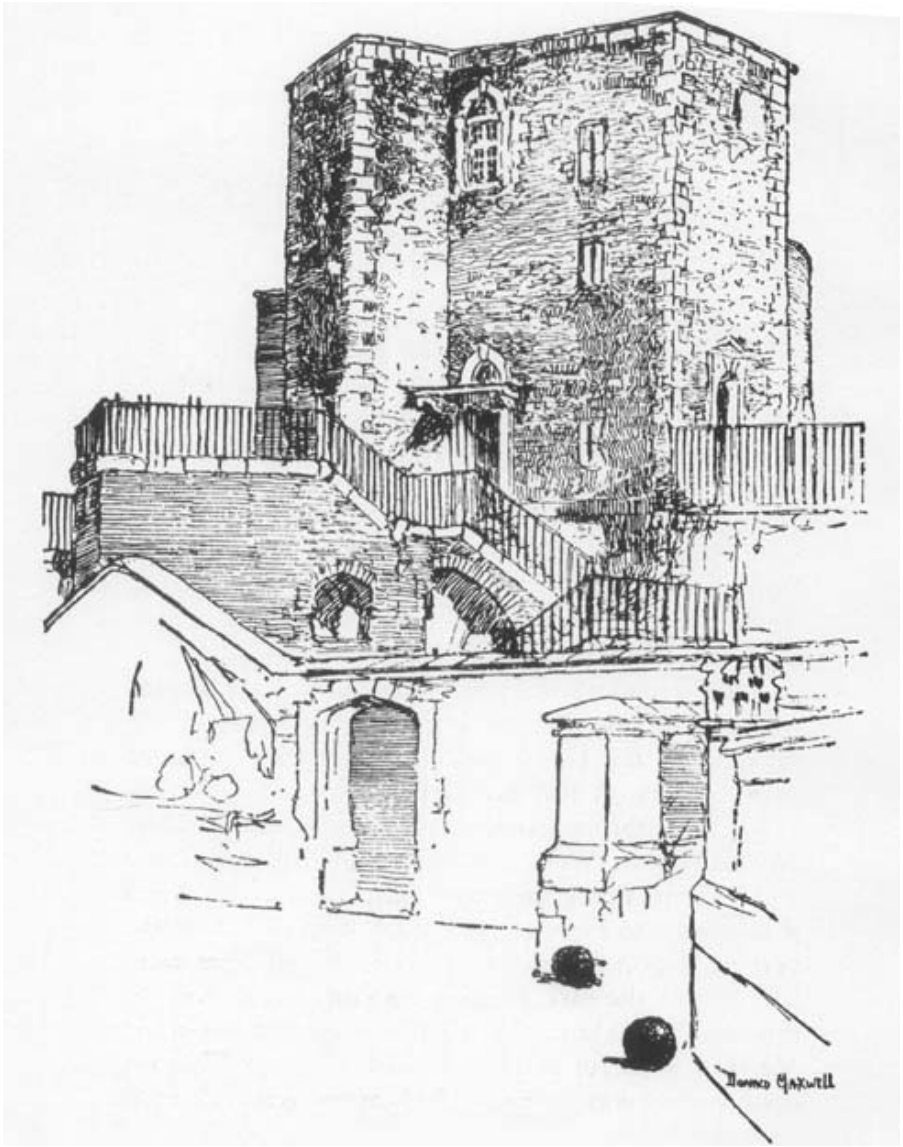
A body of men with even stronger nerves than the sentries - if such were possible - are the Department of the Environment Custody Guards, one of whose many tasks is to check security within the White Tower during the night hours. In the brooding silence of the vast shadowy rooms it is not easy to dismiss a creaking noise as just an old floorboard, that cold breath of air as just a draught - especially when all windows are tightly secured! And as for a faint smell of incense, once experienced – in 1975 – by a security warden – rubbish! Though remembering that high prelates did attend the interrogation of heretics under torture, why should there not be the ghost of the aroma of incense?

Of *course* there couldn't be eyes watching malevolently through the slits in that knight's helmet – but what would *you* see if you turned round really quickly?

Oh, no, the White Tower at night is no place for the faint of heart – in any century.

The Martin Tower

Here in the midmost of a modern day,
When clarity of thought and deed hold sway,
What parcel of fancies with the thread undone
Can set man's dignity off at the run,
Wailing and sobbing as a babe at the knee,
To shudder at sights none other can see.



The Martin Tower

At the north-east corner of the inner wall stands the Martin Tower, a tower of many ghostly legends. At the turn of the century it was reported that a figure in white walked the upper room, to the great alarm of the yeoman warders - and even in these times there are some workmen who are reluctant to work inside it, such is its eerie atmosphere. George Boleyn, Anne Boleyn's brother, was imprisoned in the Martin Tower, later being hanged, drawn and quartered on the vengeful instructions of King Henry VIII.

Yet one man whose spirit is reputed to linger around this tower is one who was acquitted and released! The intrigue of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 involved many names. A few are well known, such as Guy Fawkes, Ambrose Rookwood, Father Gerard; many are less known, Winter, Wright, Kay. One such latter was Thomas Percy, an active conspirator in the Plot, a man related to Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland. Upon the discovery of the plot, charges were laid against the earl, alleging his complicity. And so this elderly and learned gentleman was confined in the Martin Tower for no less than sixteen years. That his confinement was not particularly arduous is evidenced by the fact that his family lived with him for some of that time, and that he formed a scientific and literary circle within the Tower of London, other erudite prisoners, among them Sir Walter Raleigh, visiting the Martin Tower to debate the finer points of the times with the 'Wizard Earl' as he was known.

The Earl was subsequently released in 1620 after paying a £30,000 fine, truly a fortune in those days. Whilst confined he took his exercise on 'Northumberland's Walk', the battlements each side of the Martin Tower. Although he suffered neither torture nor sudden death, his ghost was seen, late in the last century, by sentries who, terrified, would only mount guard in pairs. Not only that, but the innocent passer-by has on occasion felt unseen hands push him – or her! - down the steps by the Martin Tower.

Not all happenings end so mildly. Indeed one poor unfortunate snapped beneath the strain of such an experience – and paid with his life. He was a sentry who, in January 1815, was on patrol before the arched doorway of the Martin Tower (then the Jewel House). Midnight was striking when, to his sudden horror, he saw the figure of a huge bear emerge from beneath the door. Desperately he lunged with his bayonet, only to have the weapon pass through the shape and

embed itself in the oaken door. His comrades, hearing the commotion, hurried to the spot – to find him stretched unconscious on the ground.

Questioned the next day by the Jewel House Keeper, Mr Edmund Lenthal Swifte, the sentry was 'trembling and haunted by fear, a man changed beyond recognition'. Within two days he was dead-during which time his bayonet still pierced the ancient timbers of the door he had died guarding.

And such are the quirks of fate that it was Lenthal Swifte himself who was involved in one of the eeriest emanations ever to occur within the fortress. One cold night in October 1817 the Keeper of The Crown Jewels was having supper in the dining room of the Martin Tower. The three doors to the room were closed and heavy curtains shrouded the two windows. His family, consisting of his wife, their son aged seven, and his wife's sister, sat round the oblong table, his wife facing the fireplace. Two candles illuminated the scene, though doubtless a fire burned bright as well. Mrs Swifte raised a glass of wine and water to her lips, then suddenly exclaimed, 'Good God! What is that?' Swifte looked up – to see what appeared to be a glass cylinder about three inches in diameter floating above the table; within it bluish-white fluids swirled and writhed. It hovered then, moving slowly along, passed behind his wife. Immediately she cowered, covering her shoulder with both hands. 'Oh Christ!' she shrieked. 'It has seized me!' That she felt *something* was evident, for no mirror faced her, only the fireplace, yet her sister and son saw nothing of the appearance. Mr Swifte, filled with horror, sprang to his feet and hurled his chair at the hovering apparition - to see the tube cross the upper end of the table and disappear in the recess of the opposite window.

Later Mr Swifte, an intelligent and highly responsible official, set down a detailed report of the occurrence. Never once when recounting it during later years did he change a single detail – or deny the terror which imprinted itself on his memory that dark night in the Martin Tower.

Not all visitations in that locality are, however, hostile. South of the Martin Tower and connected to it by Northumberland's Walk lies the Constable Tower. Once, long ago, the residence of the Constable of the Tower of London, it is now the home of a yeoman warder and his wife.

Over the years since 1973 a 'presence' has manifested itself. This spirit has nudged the wife's arm so determinedly that the pen spluttered sideways across the paper! The occupants of the Constable Tower are immediately aware of its arrival, because it is heralded by a strong 'horseman' smell, a compounded odour of leather, of sweating horseflesh, - that of a rider who, having just dismounted after a long

hard gallop, strides into his home.

'He's here again!' comments the yeoman warder, and his wife nods agreement. They're not apprehensive for, far from being hostile, this spirit generates a warm friendliness - a rarity indeed in the Tower of London!

The Salt Tower

There is a merrie England
Of a compact sphere,
That dwelleth here
Within the Tower of London.
Merrie enough if there be gain
At plain man's torture,
Lover's pain,
Liar's shriek, honesty's prayer,
And the signet of blood on floor and stair.
So pause as ye go, think as ye stand,
Of the fluttering kerchief,
The enfeebled hand.
Did ye not see them?
Say now for sure,
For a ghost made not welcome,
Appeareth the more.

The Salt Tower guards the south-east corner of the Inner Ward. Originally it could only be entered via the battlements, as could the Beauchamp Tower and others. The lower room therefore was a dark and noisome dungeon, half underground, though the upper cells were little better. Dating from the thirteenth century, it too confined many prisoners behind its grim walls. Most of them were Jesuit priests, caught in the religious persecutions of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One such was Henry Walpole, a young Englishman. He had witnessed the execution of Jesuit priests, men who had been terribly tortured for their Catholic beliefs. This spectacle, at a time when this country was at war with Spain, only inspired Walpole to take over their task. Already converted, he became a Jesuit and in 1589 he joined the Spanish Army in Flanders, as a chaplain. Four years later he returned to further the Catholic cause. He was captured and sent to the Tower of London. There every effort was made to extract information from him. Despite being racked many times he remained silent. He was imprisoned in the Salt Tower and there on the cold stone walls he carved his name and those of the saints who gave him the strength and fortitude of soul to endure the torture and confinement. At last, in 1595, he was taken to York where he was tried and executed, probably by being burned alive.

One late afternoon in 1973 a yeoman warder visited the Salt Tower. He had recently been reading a book about the Jesuits, a book which discredited their principles and condemned them as traitors. He mounted the narrow winding stairs and, alone in the gathering gloom, he studied the inscriptions so laboriously carved by tortured hands. Without warning, a sudden glow illuminated the prison chamber - and he felt some ‘thing’ touch him on the back of the neck! For one moment he stood frozen with fear – then hardly knowing what he was doing he fled down the spiral stairs and out of the arched doorway. It was some considerable time later that he was able to control his racing pulses and calm down. Yeoman warders are not given to imagining things - but the book, needless to say, is no longer in his possession!

Nor is it only sensations which pervade this particular tower. On 12th January 1957, soon after midnight, two guardsmen on sentry duty saw a shapeless white form high up on the battlemented roof of the Salt Tower. As they stared unbelievingly, the apparition lingered -

then slowly faded away!

Just a few yards from the Salt Tower stands the new History Gallery. Before its foundations were laid, excavations took place alongside the base of the Roman Wall there. At a depth of more than fifteen feet a grave was discovered in 1976, a grave containing the skeleton of a young man. He lay on his back, his knees slightly bent, his hands crossed before him. His head was tilted to one side - and in the skull gaped an ugly hole.

Who was he, this Iron Age youth who had lain there for nearly two thousand years, making his the earliest human remains to have been found to date within the City? How different was his life from ours? How violent his death - and why?

And will his spirit return, to drift phantomlike in the dim recesses of the History Gallery, to reproach those who dared to violate his last resting place?

Conclusion

I would smile me a smile,
Sing me a song,
Dance me a dance
As the day is long.
But who would I partner,
Death or delight?
Now that is the question.…
That is the fright!

Most of the uncanny happenings within the Tower of London have been experienced by sentries and yeoman warders. This is quite understandable, they being on duty in the Tower grounds during the traditional haunting times, the hours of darkness.

But should you, dear reader, visit the Tower of London, do not get the impression that you are exempt from similar experiences; do not think for one minute that the Past will not reach out and tap you on the shoulder, to remind you of the horrors and violence enacted within this most historic of castles.

Within and around the towers the memories linger, waiting perhaps to reveal themselves to those whose thoughts or sympathies may be receptive to them.

A candle flame is almost invisible in the sunlight -but it is still there. So it is with the Ghosts of the Tower of London - and if you look where the shadows linger, in the corners, round the stairs – you may see them too.

Tower of London	W G Bell	1920
The Beauchamp Tower	W R Dick	1863
Her Majesty's Tower	Hepworth Dixon	1885
Tower of London	R Davey	1910
Memoirs of the Tower of London	Britton and Brayley	1830
History of the Tower	J Bayley	1830
Tower of London from Within	G Younghusband	1919
Walks in London	A J C Hare	1878
Romance of London	J Timbs	1865
Old and New London (magazines)		1874

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